

Palestinians demand release of prisoners

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Several hundred Palestinians demonstrated Saturday in Gaza City demanding the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) release their jailed relatives from its prisons. Around 200 people, many of them women holding pictures of their jailed sons and husbands, demonstrated outside the headquarters of the legislative council in Gaza City, witnesses said. "The jailing of honest men is a blow against unity," many of them shouted. The PNA holds scores of prisoners belonging to opposition groups, including the Islamist group Hamas, many of whom have been held without trial. Israel has pressured Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to arrest more in a stepped-up crackdown against anti-Israel activists as a precondition to advancement in the deadlocked peace process.

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Zeroual back at work after operation

PARIS (AP) — Algerian President Liamine Zeroual officially returned to work Saturday following an operation to improve the circulation in his right leg, an official communiqué said. Mr. Zeroual, 57, was successfully operated at a private clinic in Switzerland on March 10 to relieve "acute arterial blockage" in his leg. Following his return to Algeria on March 18, Mr. Zeroual spent just over two weeks recovering. A retired general, Mr. Zeroual, was elected president in November 1995. The army appointed him to the job in January 1994 as part of a transition period after the military cancelled elections an Islamist party was poised to win in 1992. But the move unleashed an Islamist insurgency that has claimed an estimated 75,000 lives.

Washington urges U.S. citizens in Egypt to be cautious

WASHINGTON (AFP) — U.S. authorities warned Friday that "extremist groups may be planning terrorist attacks on U.S. interests" in Cairo in the near future. "The U.S. government has received information of undetermined reliability" to that effect, the U.S. State Department said. It warned U.S. citizens travelling or living in Cairo to exercise "greater than usual caution."

PNA officials in Cairo for talks on peace process

RAMALLAH (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat sent a team of officials to Cairo on Saturday for talks with Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa over the peace process, officials said. Chief negotiator Saeb Erakat led the Palestinian delegation, which was to meet with Mr. Musa and with Osama Al Baz, the top political adviser of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, officials in Mr. Arafat's office told AFP. They were to "consult over the latest developments in the peace process," the officials said. The Palestinian National Authority called on the United States on Saturday to make public a proposal for an Israeli troop withdrawal in the West Bank in order to stop the "dangerous deterioration" in the peace process.

Arab Israeli MP visits Syria

DAMASCUS (AFP) — An Arab Israeli MP, Azmi Beshara, is visiting Syria for the second time in four months, Palestinian sources said Saturday. Mr. Beshara, a member of the Israeli parliament, or Knesset, arrived here Friday and is scheduled to give a speech at Damascus University, the sources said. He is also scheduled to meet leaders of various Palestinian groups based here including Georges Habash, head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Mr. Beshara last visited Damascus in December and held talks with Syrian Vice President Abdul-Halim Khaddam and Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaa. In August, a delegation of 50 Arab Israelis, including six members of the Knesset, made an unprecedented visit to Syria and were received by President Hafez Al Assad.

Turkey cracks down on radical Islam

ANKARA (AP) — Carrying out measures urged by the military to keep Turkey secular, police on Saturday rounded up seven members of an Islamist sect and closed down two unlicensed Koran courses, the Anatolian news agency said. The seven, belonging to the Kadiri sect, were arrested in southeastern Gaziantep city for organising illegal religious rituals, it said. Bowing to pressure from the military, the government has become less tolerant toward religious sects. They are banned by law but authorities have turned a blind eye. Two Koran study courses were also closed in southeastern Sanliurfa city, the agency said.

Upon his return home in 'excellent health' Monarch supports prospect of Arab summit to tackle peace

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein described Israel's acceptance of U.N. Security Council Resolution 425 that demands an unconditional Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon as a positive step, voicing hope that similar steps will follow in the Golan Heights and Palestine.

"I hope this could be a positive step on the way towards not only the withdrawal from Lebanon, which is an implementation of the U.N. Security Council resolution, a decision which we have so long waited for. The same should apply to the occupied Syrian Heights and also the peace process should be resumed on the Israeli-Palestinian track as soon as possible."

In a press conference upon his return, King Hussein Saturday described his trip to the U.S. and his talks with U.S. President Bill Clinton and senior administration officials as very positive and successful.

"My visit to the United States was timely and the results of my talks were very positive," particularly with regard to the delicate situation in the Middle East."

Regarding prospects of holding an Arab summit, King Hussein said: "There have been some efforts in this direction and we will pursue our efforts and I will try to learn more about developments that took place during my absence. But I am for the coordination and preparation of a successful meeting and I hope that the meeting will take place soon."

6 Palestinians wounded in clashes PNA demands Israel stop inflaming crisis, pledges to release results of Sharif probe

Combined agency dispatches

ISRAELI TROOPS on Saturday shot and wounded six Palestinians in clashes in Abu Dis, a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Arab east Jerusalem, witnesses and hospital sources said.

They said around 200 Palestinians threw stones at Israeli soldiers after a rally mourning the death of Mohieddin Al Sharif, a master bombmaker belonging to the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas). They also burned tyres and blocked roads.

Soldiers fired rubber-coated metal bullets and teargas at the protesters. Hospital sources and witnesses said six Palestinians were wounded by the bullets and a further 30 suffered from teargas inhalation.



Her Royal Highness Princess Aisha hugs His Majesty King Hussein upon his arrival back home Saturday. His Majesty said that his health is "in excellent condition" and that he still has to continue a course of antibiotics for one week (Photo by Yousef 'Allan')

take place soon."

King Hussein stressed the need for great efforts to give momentum to the peace process, particularly on the Palestinian-Israeli track and to achieve a just and comprehensive peace.

Leading President Clinton's position, the King

said: "I felt that he was determined to do whatever he could to save the peace process."

Asked if he had discussed with President Clinton the Israeli withdrawal proposal, the King said: "I have had frank discussions with President Clinton but the United

States is conducting direct talks with Palestinian and Israeli sides. I don't have a clear picture about the situation right now but I understand that the atmosphere is encouraging; however the American proposals are not

(Continued on page 7)



Palestinians throw stones at Israeli soldiers as others duck the fire during clashes in the West Bank village of Abu Dis on Saturday (Reuters photo)

Rantissi: Izzeddine Al Qassam must make good with its threats. Revenge is coming

Amid threats by Hamas to avenge the death of its chief bombmaker, the

Palestinian National Authority (PNA) said Israel had to stop inflaming an already volatile situation.

In a statement after its meeting late Friday, the Palestinian cabinet said it would release its findings about the death of 32-year-old Sharif as soon as its investigation was complete.

Sharif died in mysterious circumstances Sunday near the scene of a car bomb explosion in a garage in an industrial zone of the West Bank town of Ramallah. Israel said he died when a powerful bomb, apparently intended for an attack on Israel, exploded prematurely. Israeli officials categorically denied any involvement in the death.

However, an initial Palestinian police statement, citing an autopsy, said Sharif had been shot to death before the blast and that the explosion was set off by

(Continued on page 7)

U.S. lawmakers call on Clinton not to pressure Israel

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Eighty-one U.S. senators called on U.S. President Bill Clinton Friday to forego pressuring Israel to withdraw from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in order to relaunch the Middle East peace process.

Public pressure on Israel to pull out of the occupied territories would be "unfair and counterproductive," the senators said in a letter to Mr. Clinton that was initiated by Republican Connie Mack and

Democrat Joseph Lieberman. Washington should continue to act as a mediator and "quietly urge the Palestinians to accept Israel's latest offer and move to final status negotiations," the senators wrote.

"Israel has yielded virtually all of the Gaza Strip and 27 per cent of the West Bank... to the Palestinian Authority for civil administration," according to the letter.

Washington has been pushing for a 13 per cent troop

withdrawal from the West Bank, well beyond the nine per cent of land Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is reportedly ready to offer.

"Many Palestinians continue to use terror and violence as a political tool against Israel. [Palestinian] Chairman [Yasser] Arafat... repeatedly threatens renewal of widespread violence and continues to withhold full security cooperation with Israel," the letter

says. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on Thursday warned that U.S. patience as Middle East mediator had its limits and that Israelis and Palestinians should swiftly get their negotiations back on track.

"At some stage, this process of us trying to push when they are not making the hard decisions will have to conclude," she told a group of newspaper managers.

Government orders release of most Ma'an detainees

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The government on Saturday ordered the release of most of the remaining detainees held for their alleged involvement in pro-Iraqi riots that rocked the southern city of Ma'an last February.

The surprise move, ahead of the start of the Muslim 'Eid Al-Fitr feast on Tuesday, was apparently aimed at calming residents of

Ma'an, still upset by the government's firm response to two-days of unrest, opposition sources said. Deputy Prime Minister and Information Minister Abdullah Ensour told reporters on Saturday that most of the 18 detainees, linked to the Feb. 20-21 unrest, were freed early yesterday.

He declined to give further details, but deputies representing Ma'an said they believed 13 men were

released.

Mohammad Abdullah Al Katib, 22, was killed and over 23 were injured in clashes between pro-Iraqi demonstrators and police trying to enforce a ban on all public rallies.

The government placed Ma'an under a six-day curfew that caused electricity, water and food shortages while the army conducted house-to-house searches

(Continued on page 7)

Jordan says assassination of Sharif hampers peace progress

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour Saturday said that the assassination of a Hamas leader in the West Bank hampers any possible progress in the peace process.

"The episode of assassination and counter assassination irrespective of its source is a matter that contributes to the stalemate in the peace process," Dr. Ensour told reporters following the weekly Cabinet session.

"We call upon all parties to live up to their commitments to reach a just solution that

would guarantee peace for all parties," Dr. Ensour, who is also minister of information, said.

Dr. Ensour was commenting on the killing of Mohieddin Sharif, who was widely believed to be a leader of the Izzeddine Qassam Brigades, the military arm of the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas.

Mohieddin was shot before his body was placed near a car that was then detonated by a remote control device.

Hamas blamed Israel for the assassination and vowed to revenge the killing of its leader, who replaced Yahya Ayyash who was assassinated

by Israeli agents in 1996. Israel denies that it killed Sharif.

Dr. Ensour meanwhile urged Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to implement the agreements signed with the Palestinian National Authority to spare the region an escalation in tension.

"Partial solutions or any delay in implementing them, especially those agreed upon publicly, will lead to nothing but more violence," the minister added.

Jordan, he said, denounces "terrorism" no matter its "sources or excuses."

Cohen to visit Jordan this month

AMMAN (J.T.) — U.S. Secretary of Defense William Cohen is expected here this month to hold talks with His Majesty King Hussein and other Jordanian officials over military cooperation between the two countries. A senior official announced Saturday.

Jordan News Agency, Petra, quoted Minister of Foreign Affairs Jawad Anani as saying that Mr. Cohen's visit to the King-

dom was part of a regional tour to several Middle Eastern countries.

No date was given for the visit, that was scheduled last year but postponed during the crisis between Iraq and the U.S. over U.N. inspection activities in Iraq.

The expected visit by Mr. Cohen to Amman follows a meeting with King Hussein in Washington last month, where the two sides discussed U.S. military cooperation.

The two sides also discussed upgrading Jordanian army with high-tech equipment.

The U.S. agreed to give Jordan \$225 million in assistance for the next year.

On March, the last batch of U.S.-made F-16 aircraft arrived to the Kingdom as part of American military assistance to the country in line with the "Peace Falcons" programme which President Bill Clinton announced in Feb. 1996.

U.N. inspectors leave Iraq, no prohibited weaponry found

BAGHDAD (AFP) — U.N. arms inspectors did not find any prohibited weaponry during their initial survey of eight presidential sites in Iraq, a member of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) on disarmament said Saturday.

"We did not anticipate finding any type of prohibited items in those areas, and we did not find at this stage any sign of prohibited items," said missile expert Roger Hill.

Mr. Hill stressed, however, that the week of visits to presidential sites which began on March 27 consisted of "surveys" rather than full-fledged inspections.

The searches of presidential sites in Iraq are being carried out by members of the U.N. Special Group made up of UNSCOM weapons experts, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) representatives and diplomats.

The 70 U.N. weapons experts in the Special Group left here on Saturday for UNSCOM's rear base in Bahrain and were followed later in the day by the 20 senior diplomats accompanying them on their inspections.

The head of the Special Group, Sri Lankan arms expert, Jayantha Dhanapala, said he would meet with U.N. chief Kofi Annan in New York to give him his report.



U.N. Special Group chief Jayantha Dhanapala of Sri Lanka (left) prepares to leave Baghdad with French diplomat Marcel Laugel, Saturday (AFP photo)

reached agreement with the Iraqi authorities here on Feb. 23 on opening up the presidential sites to inspection. The accord defused U.S. and British threats to use military force against Iraq.

Charles Duelfer, the UNSCOM deputy chairman, said Saturday that the visits to presidential sites were important in establishing the "principle of access to all areas of Iraq, something that did not exist before."

"Iraq had denied us access to certain areas, but now we have established the principle that we can go to all areas of Iraq," he said.

credible both in terms of accounting for past weapon programmes... and being able to monitor in the future that they don't restore those programmes," Mr. Duelfer said.

UNSCOM still needs "a better declaration on what their programmes were," he said. "We still haven't fully accounted for the biological programme, the chemical programme and in fact, even the missile programme," he said.

"So we have to resolve those issues," Mr. Duelfer said. Mr. Duelfer also told reporters that Iraqi officials had entirely cooperated in the inspections and provided the access UNSCOM needed.

U.S. envoy holds further talks with Cyprus leaders

Nations have called for an independent inquiry into the violence, but so far the Algerian government has refused, saying such an investigation would amount to interference in the country's domestic affairs.

Two get death penalty for killing Iranians in Pakistan

The report outlined "continued assaults on the independence of the judicial authority through referring civilians to military and state security courts" and said that 317 civil-

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Two people accused of killing five Iranian air force cadets in Pakistan last year were sentenced to death by an anti-terrorism court Saturday, officials said.

"Now the world has entered a phase of globalisation, people should have a new understanding of the situation in the Middle East," he said.

Announcing the verdict in the maximum security Adiala

senior officers, and seizing weapons and equipment," according to the statement received from the NDA in Erbil.

12:00Vienna (add) (RJ)
12:15Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
12:30Rome (RJ)

terly moderate. Temperatures are expected to rise gradually during the coming days. In Aqaba, it will be warm and sunny, winds northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.	
Amman	06/17
Aqaba	12/28
Deserts	05/20
Jordan Valley	12/26

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 14, Aqaba 26 Humidity
readings: Amman 77 per cent,
Aqaba 28 per cent.

**USEFUL
TELEPHONE
NUMBERS**

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Walid Al Masri	5675485
Dr. Yousef Rashid	575792
Dr. Jusu'a Abu Dhiab	75848
Dr. Khalil Jbali	784450
Viras pharmacy	5661912
Viras pharmacy	783936

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
 The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
 The Islamic, Abdis5666131
 Hussein Medical Centre Ltd. 836813
 Lizzemba566613
 Lizzemba4630195
 Khalidi Maternity4644281/6
 Khalid Maternity4642441/2
 Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
 Malhas, J. Amman.4636140
 Palestine, Shmeisani5607701
 Shmeisani Hospital5669131
 University Hospital845345
 Al-Muasher Hospital 5666227/9
 Al-Ahli, Abdali5664164/6
 Italian, Al-Muhajreen 7771013
 Al-Bashir7751116/5
 Army, Marka5916117/5
 Queen Alia Hospital 560240/50
 Arenal Hospital5674155

ZARQA:
 Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)683323
 Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
 Ibn Sina Hospital.....(09)868732

(RJ)	
23:15	..... Vienna, Aqaba (RJ)
01:00	..... Cairo (RJ)
Other Flights	
06:30	..... Tel Aviv (LA)
11:00	..... Sana, Ta'iz (TY)
12:30	..... Jeddah (SV)
12:50	..... Moscow (SU)
13:30	..... Abu Dhabi (GF)
15:40	..... Doha (QR)
19:00	..... Paris (AF)
20:25	..... Tel Aviv (LA)
21:40	..... Cairo (MS)
22:20	..... Istanbul (TK)
23:35	..... Larnaca (CY)
23:40	..... Beirut (ME)
01:15	..... Amsterdam, Beirut (KL)
04:15	..... London (BA)
Royal Wings (RW)	
08:45	..... Aqaba (RW)
10:05	..... Amman (QAIA) (RW)
10:50	..... Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
18:20	..... Tel Aviv (RW)
19:30	..... Amman (QAIA) (RW)
22:20	..... Aqaba (RW)
23:50	..... Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)

12:30	Amsterdam, New York (R)
13:20	London (R)
13:20	Athens (R)
21:00	New Delhi (R)
21:10	Cairo (R)
22:50	Jeddah (R)
22:00	Abu Dhabi, Dubai (R)
22:40	Bangkok (R)
22:50	Jeddah (R)
00:30	Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (R)
01:00	Damascus (R)
00:45	Sana'a (R)
Other Flights	
06:15	Beirut (MS)
07:15	Tel Aviv (LA)
07:30	Paris (AF)
07:55	Damascus, London (BA)
07:50	Frankfurt (LF)
12:00	Al Hudaidh (TF)
14:00	Jeddah (SV)
14:10	Moscow
(SU)	
14:25	Doha (GF)
14:30	Doha (QR)
21:10	Tel Aviv (LA)
22:40	Cairo (MS)
02:15	Beirut, Amsterdam (KL)

The United Catholic Church
Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic
Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
892679
The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052
The Anglican Catholic Church

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Walid Al Masri5675485
Dr. Yousef Rashid875792
Dr. Jum'a Abu Dhiab ...758848
Dr. Khalil Jbali784450

Price Complaints.....	5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints.....	897457
Amman Municipality Complaints.....	787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance).....	121
Overseas Calls.....	010230
Central Amman Telephone.....	462718

ZARQA:

Zarqa	Govt	Hospital
.....		09083323
Zarqa	National	Hospital
.....		72 2222

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:15 Agaba (add) (RJ)
09:30 Jeddah (RJ)
10:05 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
10:05 Lamaca (RJ)
10:25 Beirut (RJ)
10:40 Bombay (RJ)
10:50 Dubai Abu Dhabi (RJ)

Royal Wings (RW)
08:45 Aqaba (RW)
10:05 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
10:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
18:20 Tel Aviv (RW)
19:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)

12:00	Al Hudaidah (Y)
14:00	Jeddah (SV)
14:10	Moscow
(SU)	
14:25	Doha (GF)
14:30	Doha (QR)
21:10	Tel Aviv (LA)
22:40	Cairo (MS)

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Stable weather conditions will prevail with temperatures tending to rise, skies sunny to partly cloudy, winds northwesterly to northeast.

Ferdows pharmacy	778336
Al Asema pharmacy	4637055
Nairoukh pharmacy	4623672
Al Salam pharmacy	4636730
Yacoub pharmacy	4644945
Almeisani pharmacy	4637660
Najib pharmacy	847632
CRBID:	
Dr. Ahmad Qanu	781434

Jordan Tele. Repairs	5661101
Jordan Television	773111
Radio Jordan	774111
Water Authority	5680100
Electricity Authority	815615
Electric Power Co.	4636581
Flight Information	44-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport ..	44-53300

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital

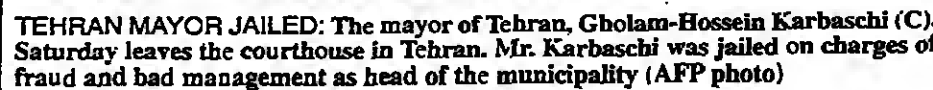
17:40	.....Madrid (RJ)
17:45	.....New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
18:00	.....Paris (RJ)
18:50	.....London (RJ)
19:10	.....Athens (RJ)
20:30	.....Frankfurt (RJ)
21:05	.....Vienna (add) (RJ)
23:15	.....Rome, Geneva

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

06:00	.....Aqaba (add) (RJ)
07:00	.....Lamaca (RJ)
07:00	.....Beirut (RJ)
10:25	.....Frankfurt (RJ)
11:00	.....Aqaba (RJ)

Royal Wings (RW)
07:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
09:15 Aqaba (RW)
10:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
17:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
18:55 Tel Aviv (RW)
21:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)



NICOSIA (AFP) — U.S. presidential envoy for Cyprus Richard Holbrooke held a second round of talks with Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot leaders Saturday in a bid to breathe life into efforts to solve the 24-year division of Cyprus.

Mr. Holbrooke met Turkish-Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş for a two-hour working breakfast in the Turkish-held sector of Nicosia before heading across the U.N.-patrolled Green Line dividing the island to meet Cyprus President Glafcos Clerides for one hour.

together in January for joint committee meetings in a bid to resolve other outstanding disputes on humanitarian and trade issues and pilgrimages.

normal ties, exacerbated by each country's support of movements opposing the regimes in Baghdad and Tehran and Iranian allegations that Baghdad barred pilgrimages to holy Shiite

In March the two sites struck an accord to organise pilgrimages for Iranians to the sites — six months after Iraq opened its border to pilgrims to enter Iraq in a move

Although Iran still allows only third-country nationals to cross its 1,300-kilometre land border with Iraq, Iranian pilgrims have been arriv-

Tehran also shelters several Iraqi opposition movements, both Kurdish and Shiite, while Baghdad supports and houses the People's Mujahedeen, the main

Central Iran 'disappears'

Central Iranian village 'disappears' in landslide

TEHRAN (AFP) — A village in central Iran has been wiped off the map by a landslide caused by torrential rains, state television reported Saturday.

The village of Abkarabad, which has around

The village is located some 200 kilometres from the town of Farsan in the central province of Sha-

The Commission
of the United
States Court
have been
in the
been

supply
damage, and
could 57
ations, and
many gone
test of His

What's Going On

FILMS

HUMAN INTERNATIONAL
 THEATRE FESTIVAL

EXHIBITIONS

[illegible]

Handmade paper
Wool Soap - 12
Shower Gels - 12
Scented Candles - 12
Scented Lotions - 12
Scented Soaps - 12

The label "Wetzel's" was also displayed prominently on the front of the car.

NEWS IN BRIEF

King Hussein Bridge to close on Tuesday

AMMAN (Petra) — The King Hussein Bridge on the Jordan River will be closed to traffic entering and leaving the Palestinian National Authority territories on Tuesday, April 7, Public Security Department sources said Saturday. The sources added that persons holding a Jerusalem residence card and foreigners are excluded and can travel via the bridge on Tuesday.

Hoteliers asked to reduce prices for Jordanians

AMMAN (Petra) — In a bid to encourage and promote internal tourism, the Jordan Hotels Association, in coordination with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, has requested hoteliers in the Dead Sea area, Hammamat Ma'een, Aqaba and Wadi Mousa to grant discounts of up to 50 per cent to Jordanians. This step is part of a marketing campaign which will continue through Sept. 19.

Airbus recognises RJ's technical crew

AMMAN (Petra) — Royal Jordanian (RJ) has received a certificate of appreciation from the Airbus company in recognition of the unique performance of RJ's technical and engineering personnel. The certificate noted that the three Airbus 320 planes in the RJ fleet clocked 7,325 flight hours last year, while the fleet's six Airbus 310 totalled 18,062 flight hours.



PRINCE MOHAMMAD BRIEFED ON PAN-ARAB GAMES: HRH Prince Mohammad, the personal representative of His Majesty King Hussein, Saturday leaves the Ministry of Culture and Youth after receiving a briefing by Minister of Culture and Youth Talal Sata'n Al Hassan on preparations for the Ninth Pan-Arab Games, which will be held in Amman in August 1999 (Petra photo)

Jordanian-Danish business meeting in Denmark set for end of month

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordanian Businessmen Association (JBA), in conjunction with Denmark's honorary consul in Jordan Tawfiq Kassar, is organising an economic conference in Copenhagen toward the end of April under the theme "Jordanian-Danish investment opportunities".

The Danish side will focus attention on bilateral cooperation in developing water resources and wastewater treatment, as well as prospects of investments in the health sector, among other subjects.

At least 150 leading businesspeople from various Danish companies are expected to take part in the meetings. They and their Jordanian counterparts will explore areas for economic cooperation and increasing the volume of trade exchanges in light of Jordan's recent signing of the European Association accord.

Building collapse in Mafraq injures 23

MAFRAQ (Petra) — Twenty-three people were injured Saturday when a building under construction at Al al Bayt University in Mafraq collapsed, according to Yousef Tahat, Mafraq Hospital director.

The injured, including 13 Jordanians and 10 of other nationalities, were rushed to the hospital for treatment. Dr. Tahat said, noting that 11 of the total have already been discharged and three were listed in fair condition at Mafraq Hospital.

The remaining 11 have been transferred to Al Bashir and Zarqa hospitals, he added. According to Al al Bayt sources, the ceiling of the building caved in while workers were applying concrete to the roof.

Meanwhile, the Civil Defence Department (CDD) Saturday announced that a total of 42,156 accidents, including fires and cases requiring rescue operations and first aid, were reported in 1997, up from 37,993 in 1996.

Traffic accidents kill two, injure 24

AMMAN (U.T.) — Two were killed and 24 injured in four fuel-tanker related traffic accidents Saturday in the Mafraq governorate, according to a statement from the Civil Defence Department (CDD).

NAF announces new procedures for loans, increase in monthly aid

AMMAN (Petra) — The National Aid Fund (NAF) Saturday announced new procedures for providing loans to needy persons and families and an increase in the amount of monthly aid to individuals.

NAF Director General Adel Shamaileh said needy families with 10 or more members will now receive JD82 in aid per month, up from JD60. Smaller families will receive proportionally smaller amounts according to a scale that reaches down to JD30 in monthly aid to a single needy individual, he added.

Dr. Shamaileh also announced that needy individuals can borrow up to JD4,000 in interest-free loans to be paid back over a period of 10 years. The NAF offers larger interest-free loans to families, groups of individuals or charitable societies to start businesses, provided that the ventures include more than manager and generate returns at least equal to the monthly amount of cash that such groups can receive.

Nurses' association elects new president, board

By Odeh Odeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Jordanian Nurses Association (JNA) has elected Khaled Rabah'a as new JNA president and a six-member association board for a two-year term.

Mr. Rabah'a won 338 votes against 64 votes to the second place candidate, Nazih Bezour, and 29 votes to the third place candidate, Haitham Haddadin. A total of 445 out of 866 registered nurses cast ballots in the elections.

Eight nurses had run for seats on the board, according to association sources, who added that members who had not paid their annual dues were not allowed to vote, in accordance with JNA regulations.

During a general assembly meeting held to announce the election results, a leading association member, Hind Abu Sufeh, said there was a need to develop the nursing profession by promoting nurses' skills in order to help the country meet the challenges of the coming century.

She also asked that the association members contribute more in fees to the JNA to secure housing and increase savings for the nurses. She urged the association board to find solutions to outstanding problems associated with the profession.

Rural region electrification project continues

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources announced Saturday that the project of providing electrical services to villages and settlements in the rural regions of Jordan is being carried out by three organisations that will continue through the rest of the present year.

Ali Bakhit, project manager at the ministry, said the National Electricity and Power Company (NEPCO), the Jordan Electric Power Company (JEPCO) and the Irbid District Electricity Company (IDEC) have been entrusted with the task.

NEPCO has been requested to supply power to 86 villages and settlements, build 57 transformer stations, and install 5,209 utility poles at the total cost of JD3 million, according to Mr. Bakhit.

He said 31 villages were electrified last year and 17 transformer stations were built, adding that work is under way to provide electricity to 17 villages and construct 12 transformer stations this year.

Referring to the IDEC, Mr. Bakhit said the company has been working to supply 109 villages with electricity and build 85 transformer stations at the total cost of JD3.6 million.

Six villages were supplied with power in 1997 at the cost of JD114,977, and this year the IDEC will provide electricity to 21 villages at the cost of JD66,636, he said.

What's Going On

FILMS

- * "La Fievre Monte à El Pao" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh on Monday at 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.
- * Cuban film "Hello Hemingway" (with subtitles in English) at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman at 5:00 p.m.

AMMAN INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL

- * Dramatic reading "Al Mutassif" at Osama Al Mashini Theatre, Abdali, at 6:00 p.m.
- * Closing ceremony: musical concert at the Royal Cultural Centre, main theatre at 9:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

- * Works by Mohammad Al Shammari at Rawaq Al Balqa, Fubels, until April 7.
- * Exhibition of electrical equipment, home appliances, clothing, perfume, sweets (marking the advent of 'Eid Al Adha) at the University of Jordan, until April 7.
- * Paintings on handmade paper at Noor Al Hussein Foundation, off Wadi Saqra St. (Tel. 5699141/2), until April 25.
- * Modern Jordanian Ceramics by Raed Al Dahleh at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until April 10.
- * Works by Jordanian artist Yousef Baddawi at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh until April 9 (Tel. 4643251/2). Also displaying a private collection of Mamdouh Bisharat entitled "A Vision, An Identity" and works by contemporary Arab artists — "The New Collection."

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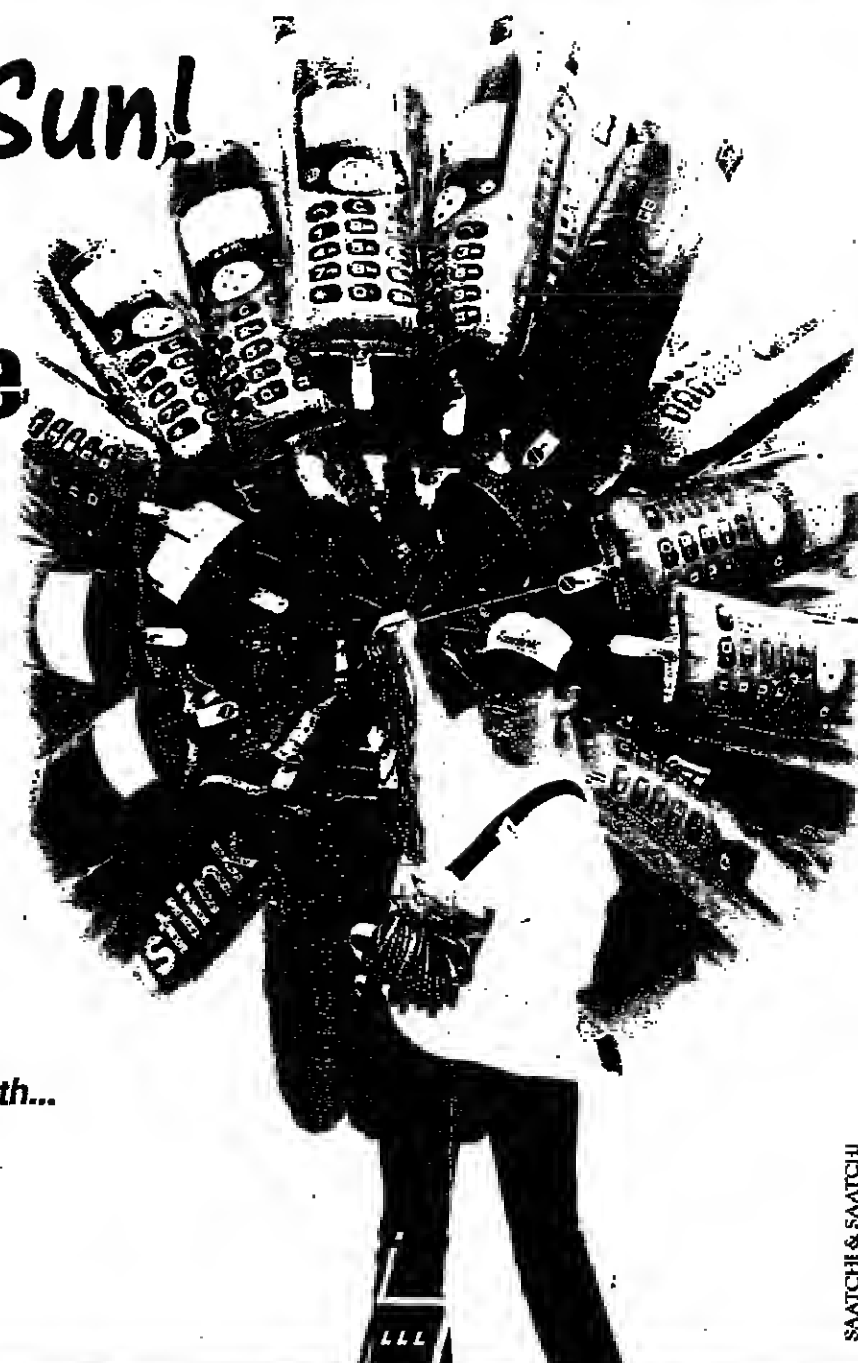
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Chinese dissident Xu Wenli released

...the former for his role up and then 1.560 each come-

ASEAN sets up fund to fight forest fires 'at all cost'

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN (AFP) — The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) environment ministers Saturday agreed to set up a central fund and mobilise both regional and international resources to contain raging forest fires in Indonesia "at all cost."

The efforts were incorporated in two "sub-regional fire-fighting arrangements" adopted by the ministers at talks here to contain the blazes, which are raging in the Indonesian part of Borneo Island and other provinces.

"The ministers agreed that the priority of the arrangements would be to ensure that all cost that fires are prevented from becoming an economic and environmental threat in Sumatra and Riau provinces, and that fires in East Kalimantan must be contained and not allowed to spread to Central and West Kalimantan," the ministers said in a joint statement.

It said the fire-fighting arrangements would incorporate "mechanisms to rapidly activate and mobilise efforts to put out the fires before they get out of control, and channel additional and complementary resources from the region and internationally."

The central revolving fund would be set up from both regional and international contributions, the statement said, without giving any figures.

Brunei's Environment Minister Ismail Damit warned in his opening remarks at the meeting Saturday that ASEAN must act immediately to tackle the "environmental calamity" of the forest infernos.

"The environmental calamity that has affected our region warrants ASEAN to act now and fast," he said at the third meeting of environment ministers from the ASEAN to discuss the fires since December.

Blazes raging out of control in Indonesia, Brunei and Malaysia are threatening to send clouds of smog across the region. Choking smoke from forest fires last year gave thousands of people respiratory ailments, threatened air and sea safety and deterred tourists.



Head of the Democratic Party Martin Lee (second right) leads party candidates and supporters at the party's campaign kick-off rally in a Hong Kong park (AP photo)

Hong Kong's Democratic Party launches election campaign

HONG KONG (AFP) — Hong Kong's leading pro-democracy group launched its election campaign for the territory's first post-colonial poll Saturday with a pledge to ignite the "flame of democracy" in China.

The Democratic Party, which emerged as the dominant party in the colonial legislature after elections in 1995, is likely to get only a handful of votes under the new electoral structure.

Party Chairman Martin Lee said Sunday he expects to win at least 11 of the 60 seats up for election.

"Anything short of that and I would be very disappointed," he said.

In a small but noisy rally in central Hong Kong, Mr. Lee called on around 150 party members and supporters to fight for democracy and uphold the rule of law.

"As we face this election in May, we all realise what a heavy burden we carry," he told the rally.

"This is the first time ever there has been some democratic element in elections on Chinese soil. This promises to be the beginning of democracy in the PRC, we

are going to ignite the flame of democracy and it will spread throughout China," he said.

Under Hong Kong's new three-tier voting structure, 10 seats will be returned by an election committee, 30 will be returned by business-based functional constituencies and 20 will be returned directly.

The system has been widely criticised for being too complicated and undemocratic. The Democratic Party claims the structure is designed to keep it out of office.

N. Korean seeks political asylum in Hong Kong

HONG KONG (AFP) — A man claiming to be a high-level North Korean official has requested political asylum in Hong Kong after getting off a train from China, a newspaper reported Saturday.

The Apple Daily newspaper said the official, who arrived at the territory's Hung Hom train station late Friday, requested political asylum from a police officer while his travelling companions were not paying attention.

An official at the South Korean Consulate General in Hong Kong told AFP by phone that the mission had asked the Hong Kong authorities for information on the newspaper report, but that there had so far been no response.

"We don't know who this man is," the official said, adding the consulate is not yet officially involved in enquiries.

Apple Daily said Hung Hom police had sent a large contingent of officers to the police station to escort the man safely into

custody and Hong Kong Security Bureau officials are investigating the man's identity.

The Hong Kong government and the Security Bureau refused to comment when contacted by AFP, but an officer at Hung Hom police station said no North Korean was being held. But he refused to confirm if a man had earlier been taken to the station.

The newspaper said security was stepped up at Hung Hom police station Saturday, with additional officers guarding all entrances and exits.

It said the man was still at the police station at 2:00 a.m. Saturday (1800 GMT Friday).

Newspaper reports late last year said a growing number of North Koreans were seeking asylum in Hong Kong.

The Oriental Daily News said at least 15 North Koreans were in the territory and awaiting resettlement in South Korea.

The newspaper said police had been told to treat North Koreans differently from other illegal immigrants due to the sensitivity of the case.

North Korea has no representation in Hong Kong, although there has been talk of Pyongyang establishing a consulate here.

Most North Koreans arriving here have travelled the length of China before slipping across the border, the Oriental Daily said.

Before last July's change of sovereignty North Korean defectors regularly defected via Hong Kong, which was then technically a third country.

South Korea says thousands of would-be defectors are in China and eastern Russia. China's official policy is to send defectors caught in border areas back to North Korea, but many still live and work in China.

Paris, Washington in agreement on U.N. genocide court

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — More than 100 nations have wrapped up the last preliminary meeting leading to the creation of an International Criminal Court (ICC) to try people suspected of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

After three years of negotiations, diplomats said Friday they had made great strides, but that the most controversial questions will be addressed during a three-week conference that opens June 15 in Rome.

Today all nations accepted the idea of establishing an international court in the wake of the bloodshed in the former Yugoslavia and the genocide in Rwanda.

But states are still deeply divided over the core issue — the amount of independence the international court would enjoy.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) claim that China, France, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia and the United

States are opposed to the creation of a really independent international criminal court.

One pressing issue is whether the future court's leading prosecutor will have the authority to pursue criminals in a country without its consent or that of the U.N. Security Council.

Some 50 "like-minded" countries are willing to abide by such authority. They include Argentina, Canada, Germany, South Africa and South Korea. They are backed by an international coalition of some 800 NGOs from around the world, determined to put as much effort behind the ICC as they have in pushing through the international treaty banning landmines.

For the United States, instead, the ICC's top prosecutor should act "only within the context of overall matters that have been referred to the court, either by the U.N. Security Council or by states parties

to the treaty," U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin said Thursday.

The U.S.-based Human Rights Watch's legal counsel Richard Dicker noted a "remarkable similarity in positions" between Washington and Paris.

"For the U.S. and France, the vision of this court is essentially a permanent ad hoc tribunal, that is a court that comes into action on the basis of the Security Council referring a situation to it," he added.

As permanent members of the Security Council, the United States and France have the power of veto, along with Britain, China and Russia.

The United States, according to Mr. Rubin, has also proposed that the ICC "should act when national legal systems fail."

The United States, like France, is concerned that the future ICC might unjustifiably go after their soldiers.

"We need to ensure that, in pursuit of justice, a permanent court does not handcuff governments that take risks to promote international peace and security and to save human lives," Mr. Rubin said.

Between now and the Rome meeting, European diplomats said, there is room for compromise. Britain has already broken ranks with its veto-wielding colleagues on the Security Council and has joined with those who uphold the "Singapore compromise," which would free the ICC prosecutor to pursue any investigation as long as the Security Council does not order him otherwise.

France has said it would rather have a less than perfect court if it were accepted by the highest number of countries, diplomats said.

Echoing a similar idea, Mr. Rubin said: "If such court is to succeed, it will need the support of the United States and other key countries of the world."

Two U.S. companies probed for links to China's missile programme

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Two U.S. companies are under a federal grand jury investigation to determine whether they provided China with expertise that could advance its ballistic missile programme, The New York Times said Saturday.

Investigators, however, were dealt a serious setback in February, when President Bill Clinton authorised one of the two companies to export to China the same expertise that is under investigation, unidentified Mr. Clinton administration officials told the daily.

Justice Department officials complained that it was difficult to prosecute the compa-

nies if the government gave its blessing to the deal, the officials added.

The two companies under investigation are Loral Space and Communications of New York and Hughes Electronics, a Los Angeles-based subsidiary of General Motors Corp.

Both firms denied any wrongdoing but refused to comment on the investigation, the daily said.

The probe stems from a 1996 accident in which a Chinese satellite carrying a Loral satellite blew up. In response to a Chinese request, Loral and Hughes sent experts to study what went wrong.

After the U.S. Customs Service and the Department of Justice were informed of the exchange, they began a criminal inquiry to see if the data and information provided by the American experts violated existing bans on the export of sensitive technology.

The guidance systems of rockets that put commercial satellites in orbit and long-range nuclear missiles share essentially the same technology.

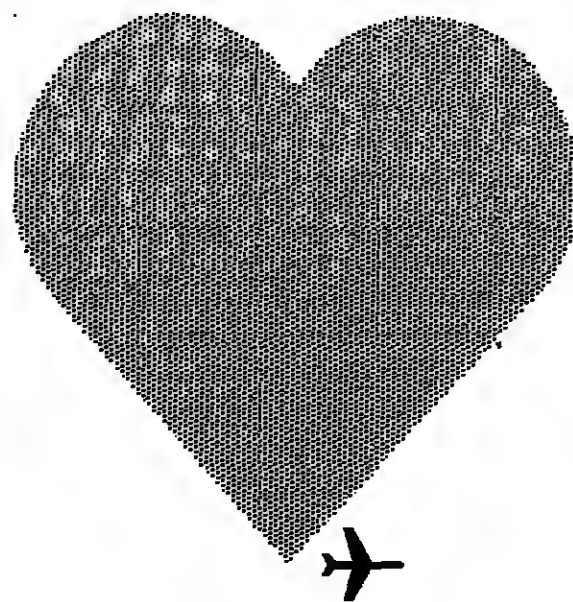
While the investigation was under way, officials said, Mr. Clinton in February authorised Loral to launch another satellite on a Chinese rocket, providing China with the

same expertise that is at issue. The president can issue waivers to the ban on exports of sensitive technology, on a case-by-case basis.

A senior official said the authorisation went through because the investigation had reached no conclusions and because Loral had properly handled subsequent launches.

White House spokesman Mike McCurry was quoted by the daily as saying that the launch approved by Mr. Clinton "will not contribute to Chinese military capabilities," because Loral has agreed to "stringent safeguards" to prevent unauthorised transfer of technology.

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WINNING THE HEARTS OF THE WORLD

Papon's conviction challenges refuge of collaborator in evil

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The conviction of former French official Maurice Papon takes away the notion that only the masterminds of crimes against humanity can be convicted.

The Washington Post said Saturday.

"The verdict may prove most important for its distinctions, which speak to the moral responsibility of one who claimed — as many have — that he was only a cog in a bureaucratic structure," the daily's editorial said.

Thursday's 10-year sentence against the former French official for his role in rounding up and deporting more than 1,500 Jews to Nazi death camps

makes it more difficult for those who cooperated in such crimes to escape justice, the daily added.

Mr. Papon's conviction "tightens accountability by taking away the notion that to be found innocent of taking part in a heinous event such as the Holocaust one need only avoid being a murderous mastermind," the daily said.

Mr. Papon, 87, argued that if he had not carried out his orders he might have been replaced by someone worse or more zealous.

"That classic refuge of the collaborator in evil now stands firmly challenged. Everyone ... can benefit from that lesson," the Post said.

280 dead in sinking of boat off Nigeria

LAGOS (AFP) — Some 280 people drowned when a boat on its way to Gabon sank in the Atlantic off the coast of Nigeria, press reports said Saturday quoting police.

The ship went down in heavy seas Wednesday off the state of Akwa Ibom, the southernmost part of Nigeria, the daily Bode Akinhamilowo and the government Daily Times reported.

Twenty people survived, the reports said. They did not give an exact total for the number on board the vessel which was also carrying food and petrol-based products.

Many bodies had been fished out off the beach at Ibaka, the Mho district.

Nigerian navy units

and divers were searching for victims.

According to one of the survivors, the ship got caught up in a storm just off Ibaka beach, the Daily Monitor newspaper said.

A senior member of staff at the Nigerian Naval College, Olu Akinsoji called on the authorities to impose tighter safety measures on maritime companies operating in the region, the Daily Times said.

The paper noted that several hundred people drowned when a ship sank in the same waters a year ago.

Overcrowding and excessive cargo have routinely been blamed by the local press for similar disasters in recent years.

It's still unlikely that Megret will ever come to power. The struggle to unseat Le Pen might even split the NF permanently, for it is mostly held together by his bullying, charismatic personality. But a truly nasty possibility is being born in

[illegible]

Features/News

Jordan Times, Sunday, April 5, 1998

7

American mischief in Italy?

By William Pfaff

PARIS — In February the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), after 36 years, reluctantly released the report of its inspector general's inquiry into the Bay of Pigs fiasco, in which nearly 1,500 Cuban opponents of Fidel Castro were killed during a CIA-sponsored invasion that the CIA leadership no longer believed could succeed.

This account of incompetence, bureaucratic obscurantism and the triumph of "commitment" over common sense has proved no obstacle to the Senate Republican majority leadership's decision recently to try to force the Clinton administration into new clandestine programmes to overthrow Saddam Hussein.

ent Lott of Mississippi, the majority leader, and other Republican senators have amended the State Department authorisation bill so as to promote still another "secret" campaign against the Iraqi leader.

Faith in clandestine action survives in Washington despite a record of failures — or successes with deplorable consequences, as in Guatemala and Cambodia — that goes back even beyond the Bay of Pigs and includes certain morally disastrous episodes only now being revealed.

American responsibility in certain acts of terrorism in Italy in the 1960s and 1970s meant to overturn Italian democracy has been under examination by Italian justice.

Little has so far been reported about this in the United States. However, it deserves attention as not only a secret operation which failed, with bad consequences for everyone involved, but because of what it represented in terms of American political morality.

In December 1969, the Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura in Milan was blown up by a terrorist bomb. Sixteen people were killed and many others were injured. It was the first in a series of anonymous terrorist acts in Italy apparently committed by right-wing extremists.

These outrages anticipated the terrorism of the left which began not long after. Together they provided the political drama of the 1970s in Italy — its "years of lead," during which right and left effectively cooperated in trying to destroy Italian democracy.

What has not been known until now is that the United States had a part in that effort.

In 1968, the Communist Party had done exceptionally well in the general elections, and young people in Italy, as in France and the United States, were in an uproar about the Vietnam War. East-West tensions were high because of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia to put down the peaceful uprising there that had claimed to represent "socialism with a human face."

At the same time, certain leaders of the Christian Democratic Party in Italy, including former Prime Minister Aldo Moro (later murdered by leftist terrorists), were contemplat-

ing a political "opening to the left" that would allow the Communists, Italy's second largest party, a greater role in the country's affairs.

According to the investigations of the Milan magistrate charged with investigating the Banca dell'Agricoltura bombing, that act and the terrorist outrages which followed were meant to provoke a military coup d'état in Rome to prevent that move to the left. His evidence indicates that American intelligence officers supported, if they did not instigate, those bombings.

The magistrate, Guido Salvini, says that "the Americans knew in advance about this and other bombings of the period, and they actively supported a strategy of tension designed to destabilise the state and create the conditions for a military coup."

(In April 1967, a military coup had taken place in Greece, with American acquiescence and tacit approval.)

Italian state television has also investigated the 1969 Milan bombing, and has broadcast a two-part documentary report of its findings. In the programmes, former CIA officials, as well as survivors of the neofascist Italian political groups implicated in the Milan bombing, discuss the campaign and acknowledge American involvement.

These two programmes were rebroadcast in February on the French-German television channel Arte, which is part of the public broadcasting system in France and is a public-sponsored cable channel in Germany and Belgium.

The charges have had wide circulation in the West European press but have not, so far as I know, had a comprehensive official response from the U.S. government.

It would appear from the television journalists' investigation that U.S. military intelligence, probably naval intelligence (the U.S. military command in Italy is naval), was responsible for the American involvement in the affair.

Given the bureaucratic rivalry and noncommunication between the CIA and military agencies, that seems plausible, even though it would constitute an extraordinary intrusion by military intelligence into political matters outside its competence.

Mr. Salvini has said simply that "foreign citizens" may be among those indicted.

There was, no course, no coup d'état. The Christian Democratic prime minister, Mario Rumor, defied those in his party who wanted a coup. President Giuseppe Saragat threatened to resign rather than preside over "the liquidation of democracy" in Italy.

The "strategy of tension" merely killed or mutilated a number of ordinary Italians. Its actual political effect was to reinforce the left, including the emerging terrorist left — equally hostile to democracy. It is a story worth more American attention, and reflection, than has so far been given.

— International Herald Tribune

As finale nears, theatre groups expand independent network

By Omar Karmi

Special to the Jordan Times

FESTIVAL DIRECTOR Nader Omran looks tired. This is the fifth Amman International Theatre Festival for Independent Groups that he has helped organise, and the biggest to date. But he looks pleased with the estimated 5-600 people who have attended performances every night of the festival: "It has been a success!"

The festival finishes Sunday night. By then, 18 performances from 9 different countries will have been shown. Five workshops and three seminars will have been held, and the festival will for the first time have spread itself to another Jordanian city, Irbid. Around 250 people from all across the world will have been given visas to Jordan — after lobbying various aid and cultural exchange organisations in their homelands for funding — accommodated and sent safely on their way. A total \$50,000 of Amman Municipality money will have been spent, and an as yet unknown amount recaptured through ticket-sales (at JD 4 each). Mr. Omran has reason to be tired.

He also has reason to be pleased. Apart from the good reviews and the popular interest, it is above all an achievement to have successfully organised an independent festival for the fifth year running. Being independent means no official involvement, but also no official help. Everything, from accommodations to lunches, from equipment to manpower, what is shown and who participates, is ultimately the responsibility of the festival organisers. In this case the responsibility lies with independent theatre groups.

Fawanees from Jordan and El Warsha from Egypt and, of course, Nader Omran. Mr. Omran is quick to point out that this is not a political principle. "We are not a political festival, and we never intend to be one." "The main advantage of being independent," Kristina Davies of the Arab Arts Project adds, "lies in artistic merit." The Arab Arts Project is an Egyptian/Jordanian group of artists and friends dedicated to the promotion of "alternatives to existing relationships among artists, funders, producers and the wider society."

Officially organised festivals differ in their agendas, she explains. These may be political, commercial, or simply a matter of occasion. If the agenda of such a festival is to promote cultural exchange, for example, emphasis may be laid on choosing traditional performances, rather than cutting edge. The agendas of independent festivals are purely artistic, because they are organised by artists. Performers are invited on artistic merit, there are no other criteria or restrictions. Where this may sound unduly competitive, it in fact has the opposite effect: "The artists feel empowered because they have a say. This encourages cooperation."

The format of the festival is indeed intended to promote cooperation. The many workshops and seminars are there for groups to learn from each other. One of the stated aims of the festival is to cement a network of independent groups; a network that unofficially



Actors from Egypt's El Warsha theatre group in performance

exists, but is not yet organised.

This is one of the most successful aspects of the festival. Mrs. Davies relates how a play produced by a Jesuit school in El-Minia, three hours south of Cairo, found its way to the El-Warsha group, and from there to Palestinian and Lebanese refugee camps through festival connections. The play — "Spinning Lives" — has been one of the highlights at the festival.

Another highlight this year, was the workshop on theatre music, held by a Swedish group. It ended up a 'jam' between the Swedes and their Arab counterparts, to the immense enjoyment of both. "I think it was a very valuable lesson for us. We learnt a lot from them, especially with regards to rhythm and percussion," said Gert-Ove Wagstan.

"The cooperative aspect of the festival, is very valuable especially for Palestinian groups," contends Ninni Rydsjö of the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). SIDA is Sweden's official

development agency, and Ninni Rydsjö is its Middle East cultural executive. "Other groups [from the region] are exposed to the rest of the world, but Palestinian groups do not even have exposure to their neighbours. For them it's a great opportunity to create an artistic network."

Cooperation, networking and cultural exchange is not just evident in the format of the festival, and the multinational nature of its participants, but also in the material being performed. Garcia Lorca's 'The Daughters of Bernada Elba' is being performed by an Egyptian group, Sharpnel, and Shakespeare's 'Othello' by the Tunisians, El Teatro.

All in all the festival has been proclaimed a success by organisers and participants alike. Sunday night there will be a musical performance at the Royal Cultural Centre in which all groups are expected to take part and have a party. One of those who undoubtedly will party the hardest is Nader Omran.

Monarch supports prospect of Arab summit to tackle peace

(Continued from page 1)

the end of the road but are a step on the path towards a final settlement.

Referring to his talks with President Clinton about opening direct dialogue with Iraq, King Hussein said: "I have put forth my view in all my meetings with the American officials I met with, and I believe

that the situation is quiet at present and I hope we will soon see a continuous movement towards ending the suffering of the Iraqi people because this is our main objective."

Asked about his health, the King said: "Thank God, my health is excellent and I have to take antibiotics for one more week as a precautionary measure against the micro-organ-

ism I have been suffering from."

Commenting on the situation in the occupied territories where a leading Hamas leader was assassinated, the King said: "I hope that things will not move beyond this point towards violence because we will be playing into the hands of extremists who wish that to happen to destroy the chances

for peace."

Replying to a question about the prospects of the U.S. announcing its initiative, King Hussein said: "I believe that the U.S. and the Palestinians are in continuous dialogue but what I have heard personally has given me encouragement that with God's help we will not have major obstacles in moving in the right direction."

Government orders release of most Ma'an detainees

(Continued from page 1)

for illegal arms and for residents involved in the unrest.

Over 460 weapons — which officials claimed were used by rioters during the unrest — were seized during the search along with large amounts of ammunition and 36 kilograms of narcotics.

"The decision to release them came upon instructions from His Majesty King Hussein and Crown Prince Hassan," Dr. Ensour said after a weekly Cabinet meeting.

"Most of those arrested were released this morning and only a few remain in jail," he added. "They will be released either before or after the Eid Al Adha feast."

Dr. Ensour said several economic projects would be launched in Ma'an, a desert town of over 26,000 residents, to help improve the area's infrastructure and create jobs to ease soaring unemployment and poverty.

Many residents have blamed poverty for the unrest, the third since 1989 riots over price hikes helped speed up efforts to launch democracy.

Dr. Ensour said 2,500 dunums had been earmarked to house an industrial estate in Ma'an. He said the government also instructed the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC) to build 900 housing units in the desolate town to benefit Ma'an resi-

dents working in the company, a major hard currency earner.

Ma'an Lower House Deputy Waleed Awajan said he and other colleagues met with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali on Thursday and urged him to free the detainees.

He told the Jordan Times that over 16 men were expected to be released on Saturday, the third batch since the unrest.

He said Ma'an's three deputies were "hoping" to meet with King Hussein, who yesterday returned to Amman after working visits to Washington and London.

"We hope to meet with His Majesty in order to close the

detainee file once and for all," he added.

He said that 35 men "who refused to surrender to police," were still at large.

"We are seeking clemency from His Majesty for all those arrested after the unrest and for the 35 people who are still at large and are still wanted by the government," Dr. Awajan said.

The State Security Court on Wednesday began the trial of opposition leader Laith Shbeilat, accused of inciting riots in Ma'an with a speech he gave at a mosque a night before the unrest, urging people to demonstrate in support of Iraq, lawyers said.

If convicted, he faces up to 10 years in jail, lawyers said.

PNA demands Israel stop inflaming crisis

(Continued from page 1)

remote control. Hamas quickly accused Israel in the killing.

Palestinian police are now looking into the possibility that Sharif was shot dead by a Hamas turncoat who collaborated with Israel.

In Gaza on Saturday, during a student rally at the Islamic University attended by about 1,200 marchers, Hamas leader Abdul Aziz Rantisi scoffed at the direction of the Palestinian investigation.

"We do not kill each other. The Israelis are the targets of the Izzedine Al Qassam Brigades," he said, referring to the military wing of Hamas, which has engineered more than a dozen suicide bombings in Israel since

1994. "We want revenge and a quick response to the killing of Mohieiddin Al Sharif," the students chanted.

Hamas official Mr. Rantisi raised cheers from the crowd in his speech, saying: "Let Netanyahu know that we are all Ezzedine Al Qassam."

"Ezzedine Al Qassam must make good with its threats. Revenge is coming," he told the crowd. A day earlier in Gaza, Hamas threatened a worldwide bombing campaign to retaliate for Sharif's death. A new leaflet from Hamas' military wing on Friday vowed to "open a new circle of war, not only inside the homeland, but everywhere." Mr. Rantisi accused Sharif's killers of torturing him before shooting him and

blowing him up.

Israel has assassinated a long list of Islamist activists since 1995, including the Islamic Jihad leader Fathi Shikaki and former chief Hamas bomb maker Yahye Ayyash. Israel also tried to assassinate a Hamas leader in Jordan last September.

Palestinian and Israeli officials accused each other of acting irresponsibly after Sharif's demise.

Israeli premier Benjamin Netanyahu said in light of statements by some Palestinian officials blaming Israel, he in turn would hold the PNA responsible for any retaliatory Hamas violence.

"I would say that they ignite an already explosive atmosphere and that they could lead to the launching of terror

attacks against Israel," he told a gathering of foreign diplomats in Israel on Friday.

Palestinian officials said Mr. Netanyahu, not they, was inflaming tensions. "Netanyahu's statements are only adding fuel to the fire," said chief Palestinian peace negotiator Saeh Erekat.

"This pre-emptive declaration by Netanyahu... is certainly irresponsible and not dealing with reality," said Palestinian Higher Education Minister Hanan Ashrawi.

"The Palestinian Authority is doing everything possible to avoid further deterioration and to safeguard the peace process. But we cannot be solely responsible."

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Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Aqaba Port registers slight growth as it handled 12.3m tonnes of goods in '97

**** THE PORT OF Aqaba registered slight growth in 1997 but did not benefit much from the shipments of goods going to Baghdad on the basis of the oil-for-food accord in implementation since late 1996.** According to port officials, the volume of goods passing through Aqaba amounted to 12.3 million tonnes last year, 2.5 per cent higher than the volume in 1996.

According to the registers of the Ports Corporation, the number of vessels that docked at Jordan's only seaport has risen by 10 per cent, from 2,735 ships in 1996 to 2,997 in 1997. The registers also showed that the number of passengers who used the seaport went down from 1,107,073 persons in 1996 to 863,565 passengers in 1997.

Despite the slight increase in the volume of goods passing through Aqaba, the amount was below the levels recorded in the '80s when most of the imports/exports to/from Iraq passed through the Jordanian port. "Aqaba did not actually benefit since the oil-for-food agreement was implemented except through wheat and grain shipments coming to Iraq from the West," indicated Tawfik Kassar, the vice president of the Association of Shipping Agents.

Mr. Kassar told the AFP news agency that most of the contracts approved by the U.N. Sanctions Committee were from Southwest Asia and, as such, the shipments arrive through Dubai to the Iraqi port of Um Qasr where shipment and handling fees are paid in Iraqi dinars.

Before the imposition of sanctions on Baghdad, Aqaba enjoyed a record prosperity period. In 1988, the volume of goods that passed through the port reached 20.1 million tonnes, 60 per cent more than the volume recorded in 1997.

Mr. Kassar and Ports Corporation Director General Mohammad Dalabeh, however, expect an increase in the activity at the port in the future in light of the U.N. permission that allowed Iraq to hike its oil exports from \$2 billion to \$5.2 billion. Mr. Dalabeh saw Iraqi imports rising in the coming period and noted that Iraqi ports cannot accommodate such a large volume. "Aqaba will remain the most efficient among the ports of the region," he emphasised.

Referring to the drop in the number of passengers, a spokesman at the port attributed the decline to the opening of a new marine transport line between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. "This line has attracted passengers who used the port of Aqaba before," he said. Mr. Kassar attributed the decline to the Luxor massacre where 58 tourists were killed last November. "Between 10 to 15 tourist boats stopped sailing since that massacre after they were operating on the marine line between Jordan and Egypt."

Mr. Kassar perceived some signs of improvements in tourism for 1998 as, until now, three large tourist vessels have docked at Aqaba (Al Ra'i + Al Dostour) and

Cement directors prefer local private sector to buy government equity

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government is reconsidering its decision to sell 33 per cent of its shares in the Jordan Cement Factories Company (JCFC) to strategic foreign partners, official sources have said.

As part of the government's privatisation plans, the government has announced earlier this year that it is going to sell 33 per cent of its shares to strategic foreign partners. The government owns 49 per cent of the JCFC.

The company's board of directors is pursuing contacts with the government to convince it to sell its shares to the private sector in Jordan, as well as to the company's workers and staff.

Board Chairman Hamdi Tabba'a said in a statement to the Arabic daily Al Ra'i that the company does not see any real need for selling the government shares, adding that the board strongly supports selling part of the government's shares to private sector institutions, and another part for Jordanian citizens and Arab investors.

The company in 1997 achieved net profits of JD11.9 million and will distribute dividends at a rate of 11 per cent to shareholders as profits.

The company's fixed assets have increased by about JD5.7 million bringing up total assets to JD 277.9 million.

Cement sales in Jordan amounted to 2.2 million tonnes, compared with approximately 975,500 tonnes sold in outside markets.

Israeli businessmen visit government entities, free zone and industrial estates

AMMAN (J.T.) — A delegation of Israeli businessmen representing 18 leading companies in Israel concluded a two-day visit to Jordan where they discussed bilateral cooperation in industrial and commercial fields.

The 27 Israeli businessmen, whose visit was arranged by the Jordanian embassy in Tel Aviv and the Israeli embassy in Amman, had meeting with several Jordanian business people and discussed ways of launching future joint ventures.

The delegation also visited the several government departments and institutions, paid a short visit to the Sahab Industrial Estate and inspected joint ventures at Zarqa Free Zone area and Al Hassan Industrial Estate in the northern city of Irbid.

The delegation also visited the Investment Promotion Corporation where they were briefed about Jordan's investment climate and the incentives brought about by the new Investment Promotion Law.

According to Shaoul Sassoon, director of the Israeli Trade Office at the Israeli Embassy, this was the first "independent business delegation to visit Jordan."

Mr. Sassoon expects this delegation to be followed by many others who have already shown interest in investing in Jordan.

Europe high-tech industry faces skills shortage crisis

GENEVA (AFP) — Leading technologists warned that a severe shortage of skilled workers in Europe could hinder the growth of its high-tech industry if no remedial action is taken. "A skills shortage could limit the future growth of Europe's high-tech industry unless it is addressed now," said Semiconductor Equipment and Materials International, an organisation which groups some 2,100 suppliers of materials and equipment for the semi-conductor industry.

A coalition of trade associations at the annual semi-conductor fair in Geneva, SEMICON Europa, called for cooperation and action among the private sector, European governments and academia to investigate solutions. The European Union (EU) has 17.5 million unemployed people "while at the same time high-tech companies are predicting thousands of vacancies they can't fill," SEMI President Stan Myers said.

The shortage of technology workers is forecast to get worse by 2005 unless action is taken, Mr. Myers warned, predicting that firms would invest in other parts of the world where skilled labour was more abundant if they could not meet their recruitment needs in Europe.

Such a development would be bad news for the EU, since the market for consumer electronic products is expected to reach \$1.5 trillion in the next five to six years, representing the world's biggest industrial sector.

"Right now there's a huge mismatch between available skills and available jobs, and that can't continue indefinitely. In global businesses like electronics and semiconductors, the manufacturers will go where the labour resources are."

SEMI has launched a so-called "skilled technology workforce" initiative with the support of eight other trade associations.

A taskforce has been set up to examine the causes of the problem and possible solutions. Experts hope to present some recommendations to the European Commission, Europe's national governments and education organisations in the autumn.

Mr. Myers said it was not just a question of creating more university places for science and technology students, since in Germany alone there are 4,000 unfilled places in software engineering courses.

"We've got to create the desire among Europeans — students and older people alike — to pursue careers in the industries that need skilled labour."

REUTERS The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.8487	0.6028	0.6280	138.31	1.4212	1622.00	2.0821	6.1836
DE Mark	0.5400	1.0000	0.3268	0.3250	72.14	0.7681	864.76	1.1256	3.3482
GB Sterling	1.6888	3.0891	1.0000	2.6313	224.60	2.3675	3022.33	3.4538	10.2738
CH Franc	0.6553	1.2113	0.3946	1.0000	88.63	0.9307	1193.19	136.35	4.0680
JP Yen	0.0074	1.3685	0.4451	1.1274	1.0000	1.0499	13.46	153.82	4.5756
CA Dollar	0.7036	1.3048	0.4231	1.0794	1.05	1.0000	1287.82	1.4705	4.3728
IT Lira	0.0005	1.0146	0.3305	0.8637	1348.44	0.7796	11.42	3.3974	10.0000
NL Guilder	0.4803	0.8882	0.2883	0.7329	64.94	0.6824	574.87	1.0000	2.9378
FR Franc	0.1615	0.2986	0.0972	0.2430	21.82	0.2284	33.61	0.0000	1.0000

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	1.0000	0.7090	3.7503	0.3770	3.6410	0.3062	3.6728	1628.00	3.4189
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	1.0000	5.2896	0.5317	5.1364	0.4318	5.1803	2165.15	4.8208
Saudi Riyal	0.2686	0.1891	1.0000	0.1005	0.97	0.0815	0.96	407.43	0.9114
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8806	9.9477	1.0000	9.66	0.8121	9.74	4063.05	0.9388
Qatar Dinar	0.2746	0.1947	1.0300	1.0300	1.0000	0.0841	1.01	418.68	0.9388
Kuwait Dinar	3.2594	2.3189	12.2499	1.2314	11.89	1.0000	12.00	4991.02	0.9388
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0211	1.0208	0.9913	0.0834	1.00	418.03	0.9388
Lebanese/1000	0.65	0.4640	2.4644	0.2467	2.3829	0.2004	2.4037	100.00	2.2389
Egyptian	0.2926	0.2074	1.0972	0.1103	1.0652	0.0896	1.0745	447.05	1.0000

Energy									
Oil	Last	Previous							
Brent	13.65	13.49							
W. Texas	16.04	16.00							
Bonny	13.65	13.49							
Dubai	12.15	12.01							
UL Gas	161.00	161.00							

Metal Prices									
Metal	Bid	Offer							
Gold (oz's)	308	308.5							
Silver (oz's)	6.5	6.55							
Platinum (oz's)	412	414							
CU (3 Months)	1413	1415							
AL (3 Months)	1700	1705							
Zinc (3 Months)	1119	1123							
Lead (3 Months)	891	894							
NI (3 Months)	8370	8400							

Main Equity Indices									
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cls		
New York	DOW JONES	8983.41	-3.23	-0.04	9030.49	8948.29	8986.64		
New York	S&P 500	1122.7	2.89	0.26	1126.38	1118.12	1120.01		
London	FT-SE 100	6064.2	11.4	0.19	6065.3	6024.5	6032.8		
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	15817.78	-185.12	-1.18	15965.3	15465.1	15702.9		
Paris	CAC 40	3932.02	-3.86	-0.1	3987.82	3918.41	3935.88		
Frankfurt	DAX	5223.82	48.86	0.91	5248.04	5203.88	5176.65		

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET														
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHARJAH														
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179														
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 04/04/1998														
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JP	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE				
346,000	251,000	ARAB BANK	13.9	1.18	23	980	298610	334.50	340.00	5.50+				
2,340	1,660	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	2	0.00	32	19786	34103	1.67	1.72	0.05+				
3,540	1,250	BANK OF JORDAN	4.2	0.00	9	4000	5395	1.35	1.34	0.01-				
2,680	1,250	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	9.1	0.00	11	4683	8195	1.75	1.76	0.01+				
1,600	4,660	THE HOUSING BK.	17.1	2.24	85	36450	196298	5.20	5.40	0.20+				
4,180	1,810	JOR. REPAIR BANK	8	0.00	3	82	149	1.85	1.82	0.03-				
2,930	1,950	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	3.7	4.97	6	3184	1950	62	62	-				
4,020	1,950	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	3.7	4.97	6	3184	1950	62	62	-				
3,900	2,070	JOR. INV. FIN. BANK	12.7	0.00	5	850	1647	1.95	1.93	0.02-				
2,350	1,520	JOR. INV. FIN. BANK/NEW	10.3	0.00	1	100	197	2.07	1.97	0.10-				
1,400	800	REIT-AL-NAB (REITVA)	5	18.29	3	2000	606	1.71	1.62	0.09-				
BANK SECTOR TOTALS											INDEX: 237.81	CHNG: +1.71	179	72389
2,400	1,590	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	5.6	12.38	6	11750	23825	2.03	2.02	0.01-				
2,350	1,800	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	8.4	0.00	7	55247	116019	2.10	2.10	-				
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS											INDEX: 121.98	CHNG: -0.05	13	66997
2,140	1,550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	10.2	4.72	9	22500	47912	2.10	2.12	0.02+				
5,500	2,450	HIGH RISE BLDG.	46.9	0.00	5	1930	6971	4.29	4.29	-				
1,550	930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	41.9	0.00	18	10175	10811	1.02	1.05	0.03+				
1,480	1,120	MID. EAST HOTELS	17.5	0.00	2	1000	1148	1.13	1.15	0.02+				
1,600	1,280	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	16.7	1.93	4	482	2006	4.17	4.15	0.02-				
1,090	900	ZARQA EDUCATION	16.7	0.00	6	2450	2328	9.6	9.6	0.01-				
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS											INDEX: 118.54	CHNG: +0.17	42	38437
1,160	960	ATTAPURES	9	0.00	3	13086	14393	1.10	1.10	-				
1,240	2,690	JOR. CENTRAL FACT.	18.3	4.04	17	18018	49055	2.73	2.72	0.01-				
1,420	1,050	JOR. PHOSPHATE MFG.	8.9	0.00	4	2750	8823	3.20	3.21	0.01+				
7,030	5,620	ARAB POTASH CO.	14.3	0.00	2	15000	88500	5.75	5.90	0.15+				
11,160	9,200	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.3	8.35	4	5080	54352	10.65	10.65	-				
2,260	1,100	INDUSTRIAL COMM. AG.	9	0.00	6	2300	2912	1.29	1.29	-				
5,700	3,440	ARAB PHARM. IND.	14.4	0.00	44	17850	92548	5.14	5.23	0.09+				
6,350	4,400	DAR ALDANA DV. INV.	6.9	6.14	1	1200	1140	5.70	5.70	-				

Davis Cup

Woodies give Australia edge over Zimbabwe

MILDURA (AFP) — Mark Woodforde and Todd Woodbridge recorded a straight sets doubles win over the Black brothers to give Australia the edge in their Davis Cup World Group first round tennis tie over Zimbabwe on Saturday.

Australia took the initiative to lead the tie 2-1 when the Woodforde, nine-time grand slam champions, eclipsed Byron and Wayne Black 6-4, 7-6 (8/6), 6-2 in two hours 15 minutes in the pivotal doubles rubber.

U.S. Open champion Pat Rafter had denied Australia's confidence in the opening singles on Friday when he lost to Byron Black in four sets after Jason Stoltenberg had opened the tie with a win over Wayne Black on his fifth match point.

Australia will wrap up the tie on Sunday against the World Group newcomers should either world number four Rafter or Stoltenberg win either of the reverse sin-

gles to set up a home quarter-final against Italy or India in July.

Woodbridge, the dominant player in Saturday's doubles, said the Australian team had been stunned by Rafter's loss and had used the extra pressure on them to focus on victory.

"We were both feeling pretty confident we would get through it but with the score at one-all it put a bit more pressure on us," Woodbridge said.

"That's why we ended up playing as well as we did today. We kept our nose to the grindstone and never let them in."

"We knew they were going to make us work for it. I don't think we played our best but we never had a lull or a down period."

The key point for Australia, according to Woodbridge, came when Zimbabwe held a set point at 6-5 in the second set tiebreaker. But Woodforde levelled the scores with a reflex volley after an

exchange at the net. Byron Black went on to double fault on set point to give the home side the tiebreak 8-6.

There was only one break of serve in the opening set, in the 10th game when the Australian duo broke Byron Black's serve to take the first set 6-4.

Australia raced through the third set with service breaks in the third and fifth games as the Black brothers began to tire.

"We didn't want to give them any sniff of a chance," Woodforde said.

"If we'd lost the game they would have had plenty of reason to topple this great Australian team with all these fine players."

"Now the pressure's back on them and we'll see how they handle it."

Saturday's victory made the Woodforde Australia's all-time champion Davis Cup combination, winning their 11th match to eclipse the 1950s combination of John Crawford and Adrian

Quist, who held the previous record of 10-1.

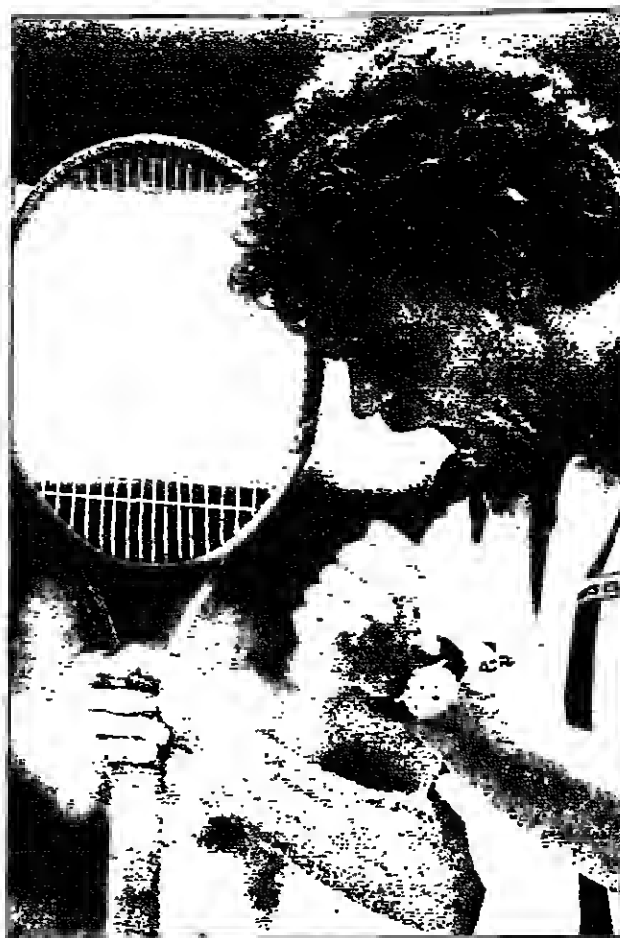
Byron Black said that while the first set was tight he and his brother could never string enough points together to have a break chance.

He said the pair, who had only lost one of their 11 previous Davis Cup doubles matches, were weary after playing three successive matches despite their renewed endurance.

"Our bodies are a little tired and a little sore but mentally we've got to stay fresh," he said.

"It's very tough to come out fighting three days in a row at this level. More often than not you're going to have a letdown and I think today was our letdown."

Wayne Black will strive to keep the tie alive in the first of the reverse singles against Rafter on Sunday while Byron takes on Stoltenberg in the fifth rubber.



Gustavo Kuerten of Brazil celebrates after he defeated Carlos Moya of Spain in their first match of the Davis Cup World Group, in Porto Alegre April 3. Kuerten defeated Moya in straight sets 5-7 1-6 6-4 6-4 6-4 (Reuters photo)



Russian Davis Cup player Yevgeny Kafelnikov bites on his racket as the rain begins to fall during a warm-up for the first round of the Davis Cup tennis tournament between Russia and the United States at the International Tennis Center of Stone Mountain (Reuters photo)

Davenport ousted as Seles survives

HILTON HEAD (AFP) — Top seed Lindsay Davenport of the United States faltered down the stretch but third-seeded compatriot Monica Seles survived a scare Friday in the quarter-finals of the Family Circle Cup.

Davenport squandered a 6-3 lead in the third-set tiebreaker before falling to ninth seed Irina Spirlea of Romania, 6-7 (3/7), 6-4, 7-6 (8/6). Seles, competing in only her second tournament of the year, advanced to the semi-finals by outlasting Patty Schnyder of Switzerland, 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (8/6).

Davenport, ranked second in the world behind Martina Hingis, committed 10 double faults as she lost for only the sixth time in 27 matches this season. Spirlea will face Seles on Saturday for a berth in Sunday's final.

Seles is a former top-ranked player who lost to Hingis in last year's final. She made her 1998 debut at last week's Lipton Championships, falling to eventual finalist Anna Kournikova of Russia in the third round. She missed the early part of the season to be with her cancer-stricken father Karolj.

Ewing wants to return for final week of season

NEW YORK (AFP) — Injured Knicks center Patrick Ewing, who was expected to be sidelined for the rest of the year after wrist surgery, reportedly hopes to return for the final week of the National Basketball Association season.

Ewing participated in shooting drills prior to Thursday night's 81-70 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers. Although Ewing did not address the media after the workout, it is believed that Ewing is hoping to return to the lineup on April 14 when the Knicks host the Washington Wizards.

"Right now, I would say that's the date," a club official told the New York Daily News. "That's what he wants."

Ewing, an 11-time All-Star, suffered a dislocated right wrist in a December 20 game at Milwaukee and underwent what was believed to be season-ending surgery the following day. However, he had the cast and three pins removed from the wrist on February 15 and has made remarkable progress over the past six weeks.

Ewing still must be cleared by doctors to return and will likely participate in a few practices before any determination will be made on his status.

French can expect 150 British hooligans

PARIS (AFP) — Some 150 hard-core British hooligans known to police are expected to descend on France for the World Cup, a senior British police officer said here Friday.

Chief superintendent Eddy Curtis, in Paris to liaise with French counterparts, said

potential troublemakers had been classified in three groups according to the danger they present.

Curtis said that 180 belonged to the most dangerous group C, but "some will be unable to come to France" as they are already subject to certain

restrictions such as reporting to a police station on matchdays.

Speaking at a meeting of police officers from 14 European nations whose teams will compete in this summer's tournament, Curtis said the 150 identified hooligans would be carefully monitored once in France.

"Most will come to France without tickets. They think they will be able to buy some from other supporters," Curtis explained, adding that British

police would cooperate fully with French officers to pinpoint known hooligans turning up at matches.

"These people are for the most part aged between 35 and 45 and have a job. They want to be a part of something, to play at soldiers," said Curtis, drawing up a profile of the "typical" hooligan. And he was adamant there was only one way to deal with them. "Lock them up. It's the only thing they understand."

SCOREBOARD

NBA			
Washington	120	Toronto	112
Atlanta	107	Houston	87
Charlotte	96	Indiana	89
Philadelphia	93	LA Clippers	78
LA Lakers	105	Cleveland	93
Boston	101	Detroit	100
Chicago	107	Minnesota	93
Utah	97	Denver	72
Portland	109	Dallas	102
Seattle	138	Vancouver	98
Milwaukee	87	Sacramento	86

NHL			
Buffalo	5	Boston	4
Ottawa	3	New Jersey	2
Edmonton	4	Dallas	1
Phoenix	6	Anaheim	3

Portuguese League			
Farense	1	FC Porto	2

Belgian League			
Harelbeke	2	Standard Liege	0

Bundesliga			
Karlsruhe SC	0	Hertha Berlin	2
MSV Duisburg	1	Kaiserslautern	1

Davis Cup			
World Group			

Italy 1 India 1

Andrea Gaudenzi (Ita) bt Prahlad Srinath (Ind) 6-0, 6-2, 1-6, 6-2
Mahesh Bhupathi (Ind) bt Davide Sangametti (Ita) 6-4, 6-4, 6-4

Belgium 1 Netherlands 1

Filip Dewulf (Bel) bt Sjeng Schalken (Ned) 7-5, 6-2, 7-5
Friday
Jan Siemerink (Ned) bt Johan Van Herck (Bel) 6-4, 6-3, 4-6, 6-1

Asia-Oceania Group II

Pakistan 3-Pacific Oceania 0

Mohammad Khaliq and Asim Shafiq (Pakistan) beat Lawrence Terc and Sanjeev Tikaram 7-5, 6-4, 6-2, 6-0
Taiwan 2-Hong Kong 0

Lin Bing-chao, Chen Chih-jung (Tpe) bt Christopher Lai, Stephen So (HK) 6-3, 6-1, 6-1

Asia Oceania Group I (second round)

Japan 2 New Zealand 1

Brett Steven/James Greenhalgh (Nzl) bt Takao Suzuki/Satoshi Iwabuchi (Jpn) 4-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-3
Goichi Motomura (Jpn) bt Teo Susnjak (Nzl) 6-0, 6-0, 6-0
Takao Suzuki (Jpn) bt Brett Steven (Nzl) 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/5), 7-5

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANIA HURCH
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RIGHT SUIT AT THE RIGHT TIME

Both vulnerable. North deals.

NORTH
♠ K J 10 7
♥ Q J 2
♦ A 10
♣ A K 8 2

EAST
♠ A 9 6 2
♥ 10 5 3
♦ Q 7
♣ J 10 9 3

SOUTH
♠ Q 4
♥ 8 4
♦ 9 8 4 2
♣ Q 7 6 4

The bidding:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1♠ Pass 1♥ Pass 2♥ Pass 3♥ Pass

Opening lead: Five of ♣

If you think you are a master technician, cover the East-West cards and plan the play of this hand at three no trump after a diamond lead. There are two problems to surmount: What do you play to the first trick, and how to take advantage of any favorable lie of the cards to secure nine tricks.

North-South were employing a range of 15-17 for a one-no-trump opening bid, hence North's one club. The rest of the auction was text-

book. Declarer's first hurdle was at trick one. Since West would have led the top of a sequence with all three touching diamond honors, East must hold one of them. If the lead is from a five-card suit, declarer can block the suit by riving with the ace. East cannot afford to jettison the queen because declarer's nine will then become a second loser.

If clubs are 3-3, nine tricks are easy. With diamonds blocked, declarer can afford to knock out the ace of spades and coast home in comfort. If clubs are 4-1, however, declarer will need a second heart trick. Which major suit should declarer tackle now?

Neither. The first chore is to test clubs by cashing the queen and ace. Only when West discards on the second club does declarer have to resort to the majors. If East has the king of hearts, there is no problem. But if East holds the ace of spades and West the king of hearts, it is essential to knock out West's entry first. If West holds both, go down quietly. Therefore, run the queen of hearts now.

That loses in the king and a diamond is led to the queen. But West has no entry back and, after forcing out the ace of spades, nine tricks are in the bank.

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PHILADELPHIA '1'

Sylvester Stallone ... in

DAYLIGHT

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

PHILADELPHIA '2'

MAJOR PAYNE

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

PLAZA

The biggest cinema production

TITANIC

Shows: 12:00, 3:00, 7:00, 10:30 p.m.

CONCORD

Kim Basinger... in

LA CONFIDENTIAL

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

Adel Imam & Yusra ... in

RISALA ILA AL WALI

Braves beat Phillies

AP — The Braves honored the late Curt Flood by wearing his number 10 in their home game against the Phillies.

Steve Trouton, who was Flood's teammate in 1970, was the first to wear the number 10 in the game.

The Braves won the game 3-1, with Trouton hitting a home run in the fifth inning.

The Phillies' pitcher, Tim Lincecum, pitched a complete game, allowing only one run.

The Braves' manager, Bobby Cox, said his team was "very happy" with the win.

The Phillies' manager, Jim Fregosi, said his team was "disappointed" with the loss.

The game was played at Turner Field in Atlanta, Georgia.

The Braves' record is now 10-10, and the Phillies' record is now 9-11.

The Braves' next game is against the Atlanta Braves on Monday.

The Phillies' next game is against the Philadelphia Phillies on Monday.

The Braves' home opener is on Monday.

The Phillies' home opener is on Monday.

The Braves' season opener is on Monday.

The Phillies' season opener is on Monday.

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Braves beat Phillies 5-1

CHICAGO (AP) — The Chicago Cubs honoured the late Harry Caray the way he would have wanted — with a victory in their home opener.

Pitcher Steve Trachsel drove in three runs with a pair of singles and allowed just four hits and two runs over 7 1/3 innings as the Cubs beat the Montreal Expos 6-2 on a frosty Friday at Wrigley Field.

The one thing missing was Caray, the legendary Hall of Fame broadcaster, who was more popular than many of the players he described — and often criticized — on TV and radio. Caray died in February and the fans gathered Friday to say one more goodbye.

In the top of the seventh with two outs, the sellout crowd of 39,102 rose to its feet and began chanting "Harry, Harry." And minutes later, Caray's widow, Dutchie, led an emotional seventh-inning stretch rendition of "Take Me Out To The Ballgame," just as her husband had done for so many years.

Brewers 7, Marlins 1: In Miami, Jose Valentin hit three homers and drove in five runs as Milwaukee handed Florida its third consecutive loss.

Valentin hit solo homers in the second and seventh innings for a 2-1 lead, then added a three-run homer in the eighth. The home runs were the first this season for Valentin, who had 17 last year.

The three-homer performance was the first at Pro Player Stadium. The last Milwaukee player to accomplish the feat was Dale Sveum against California on July 17, 1987.

Reds 6, Dodgers 3: In Cincinnati, Eduardo Perez singled home the tying run in the seventh inning and



Houston Astros shortstop Ricky Gutierrez (R) steals second while running into as Colorado Rockies Mike Lansing, who can't hold on to a throw from teammate Jeff Reed in the third inning. The Astros were hosting the Rockies in game one of a four game series at the Astrodome in Houston (Reuters photo)

Reggie Sanders followed with a three-run homer, rallying the Reds over the winless Los Angeles Dodgers.

The Dodgers fell to 0-3 because their pitchers couldn't find the strike zone. They gave up only six hits but walked eight batters, and four of them scored.

David Weathers (1-0) struck out a career-high nine batters while holding the light-hitting Dodgers in check. Scott Sullivan pitched the eighth and Jeff Shaw, who agreed to a three-year contract extension before the game, got the last three outs for his second save in two nights.

Mets 2, Pirates 1: In New York, shortstop Kevin Polcovich, who entered the game on a double switch in the ninth inning, made a two-out throwing error that gave the Mets a win over the Pittsburgh Pirates.

The Mets, who have played three one-run games to start the season, got a runner to third in the ninth when Carlos Baerga reached on a fielder's choice, went to second on a walk and took third on a two-out wild pitch by Marc Wilkins.

Astros 15, Rockies 2: In

Houston, Derek Bell tied a career-high with six RBIs as the Astros handed Colorado its first loss this season.

Bell, Craig Biggio, Sean Berry and Ricky Gutierrez each had three hits for the Astros, who had 18 hits. Houston only got a total of 20 hits in a three-game series against San Francisco to open the season.

Padres 13, Cardinals 5: In St. Louis, the San Diego Padres put this one out of even Mark McGwire's considerable reach.

Greg Myers had three hits and matched his career-high with five RBIs, and Mark Langston won his first NL start since 1989 as the Padres beat the St. Louis Cardinals despite McGwire's third homer in three games.

Giants 8, Diamondbacks 3: In Phoenix, Darryl Hamilton hit a two-run double, and Mark Gardner pitched six strong innings as the San Francisco Giants beat the Arizona Diamondbacks.

The Diamondbacks fell to 0-4, the worst start for an expansion team since the 1962 New York Mets lost their first nine games.

Gardner, who was 12-9 for the Giants last season, gave up four hits, struck out eight and walked three in his first start of the year. He retired the first eight batters before Arizona pitcher Jeff Suppan singled in the third.

Arizona's Matt Williams had two doubles, including a ground-rule hit that bounced into the swimming pool area outside the fence in right center.

Braves 5, Phillies 1: In Atlanta, Denny Neagle, the National League's only 20-game winner last season, pitched seven strong innings in his first 1998 start as the Atlanta Braves beat the Philadelphia Phillies.

Neagle (1-0), who was 20-5 in 1997, gave up four hits, walked two and struck out three in a game that was delayed two hours at the start due to thunderstorms.

Kerry Ligtenberg finished for the Braves, allowing one hit over the last two innings. Chipper Jones went 4-for-4, including a run-scoring single in the fifth inning when the Braves scored three runs off Philadelphia starter Mike Grace (0-1) to take a 4-1 lead. Jones raised his season average to .615 (8-for-13).

First Division Basketball Championship Irbid teams clash today as Jazireh meet Ahli Monday

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The second round of the First Division Basketball Championship enters its final week Sunday with the Irbid teams Jalil and Hussein playing their last matches of the season at Al Hassan Sports City.

Al Hussein are now in last place and according to regulations have already been relegated.

However, Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) President Mudar Majdoub was quoted as saying that relegation might be scrapped out this year to leave at least two teams from Irbid.

Al Jalil are currently fifth and they need to win their last match to battle Al Jeel for fourth place.

Al Jalil had won their first round encounter 47-35.

In Monday's matches Al Orthodoxi have an easy match against newcomers

Al Jeel who have succeeded in keeping their place in the prestigious group.

Meanwhile Al Jazireh will meet Al Ahli whom they beat 75-69 in the first round in the latters' most impressive performance this season.

Al Jazireh remained atop the standings on score difference despite losing to Al Orthodoxi 73-69 Friday. They had won their first round encounter 92-84.

Al Ahli had been humiliated by Al Jalil before winning 57-82 in their last match, however they will finish among the top three

who have a shot at the title with introduction of the two-round playoffs which start April 12.

However, Judging by the results to far, last season's runners up Al Ahli seem to stand the least chance.

Their inadequate pre-season training has led to an inconsistent form and are suffering the ill-effects of having started training late as they were busier tackling technical obstacles like recruiting a coach and turning back veterans Yousef Zaghloul and Marwan Ma'touq to the lineup after missing a season.

Al Orthodoxi finished third last year but are in better shape to resume their dominance of the game. Their younger lineup seem in a situation to give Al Jazireh a hard time in the fight for the title.

Al Jazireh ended a 30-year domination among the two rivals last season. Prior to that Al Orthodoxi had an undisputed reign from 1976-1989, but Al Ahli won the title in 1990, 1992, 1993 and 1994 aided by the signing of Naser Bushnaq.

Al Orthodoxi came back to win in 1991, 1995 and 1996.

STANDINGS

Team	P	W	L	Sf	Sa	Pts
Jazireh	9	8	1	833	529	17
Orthodoxi	9	8	1	754	486	17
Jeel	9	6	3	619	549	15
Jalil	9	3	6	506	741	12
Hussein	9	2	7	519	666	11
	9	-	9	478	636	9

Texas beat Toronto; White Sox win 10-4

TORONTO (AP) — Rick Helling pitched a four-hitter for his first shutout in four years and Mark McLemore had three hits and two RBIs as Texas beat Toronto 5-0.

Helling (1-0) limited Toronto to four singles, walked two and struck out two in Friday's game. It was the first complete game shutout in the American League this season and the second of Helling's career.

White Sox 10, Devil Rays 4: In St. Petersburg, Florida, Frank Thomas drove in four runs and Robin Ventura went 4-for-4 with three RBIs as the Chicago White Sox beat the Tampa Bay Devil Rays.

The White Sox rebounded from Thursday night's 20-4 loss to Texas with 15 hits against the Devil Rays, who were coming off two straight victories over Detroit.

Orleans 10, Tigers 2: In Baltimore, B.J. Surhoff hit a three-run homer and Doug Drabek earned his 150th career victory as the Baltimore Orioles extended their winning streak to three.

Cal Ripken had three singles, scored three times and drove in a run for the Orioles, who led 6-0 after three innings.

Royals 9, Twins 5: In Minneapolis, Dean Palmer and Kansas City ruined another home opener.

Palmer was 4-for-5 with a homer and two RBIs as the Royals rallied from a 4-0 deficit against Brad Radke and beat the Twins, who were playing the first home game of what could be their last season in the state.

The Royals, who opened the season with a win at Baltimore, scored four times in the fifth off Radke, who was 20-10 in 1997 and finished third behind in the AL Cy Young voting.

Indians 6, Angels 2: In Anaheim, California, Dave Burba won his first start for Cleveland and Brian Giles hit two solo homers off former teammate Jack

McDowell. Burba, traded to the Indians from Cincinnati the day before he was set to pitch the Reds' season opener, gave up six hits and one run in seven innings.

Yankees-Athletics, postponed: In Oakland, California, the A's were

rained out for just the 17th regular-season game since moving to California in 1968.

The game, which probably will be made up in August, was called about 30 minutes after its scheduled starting time as heavy rains pelted

the Oakland Coliseum.

Mariners 11, Red Sox 6: In Seattle, Ken Griffey Jr., Jay Buhner and Glenallen Hill homered in the fifth inning as Seattle got its first win.

David Segui added a homer, his third, in the eighth for the Mariners.

Jordan scores 29,000th point

CHICAGO (AP) — Michael Jordan had 41 points and became the third player in NBA history to reach 29,000 career points as the Chicago Bulls beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 107-93 for their 11th straight victory.

Jordan joined Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Wilt Chamberlain as the only players to score 29,000. He needed 14 points to reach the plateau.

Scottie Pippen added 18 points and Dennis Rodman grabbed 16 rebounds on Friday as the Bulls (57-17) tied the longest winning streak in the NBA this season and continued their pursuit of the league's best record and homecourt advantage throughout the playoffs.

Wizards 120, Raptors 112: In Washington, Rod Strickland had 22 points and 11 assists and led a 9-2 run midway through the fourth quarter that secured the victory as the Wizards ended their four-game losing streak.

The victory moved Washington into a tie with Orlando for ninth place in the Eastern Conference. Both the Wizards and Magic — who play each other Sunday — are one-half game behind the New Jersey Nets in the race for the conference's final playoff spot.

76ers 93, Clippers 78: In Philadelphia, Allen Iverson had 21 points, nine rebounds and seven assists as Philadelphia defeated Los Angeles.

Derrick Coleman registered his fourth straight double-double, scoring 21 points and grabbing 12 rebounds, and Theo Ratliff had 13 points and nine rebounds as the 76ers won for the third time in four games.

Hornets 96, Pacers 89: In Charlotte, North Carolina,

Glen Rice scored 13 of his 20 points in the second half and David Wesley had a career-high 15 assists as Charlotte averaged one of its worst losses of the season.

The Hornets' 17th victory in 20 games came one week after they gave up 133 points to Indiana and allowed the Pacers to shoot 60 per cent, both the highest figures allowed by Charlotte all season.

This time the Hornets put the clamps on Reggie Miller, who was suspended and fined after last week's victory for elbowing Vlade Divac. Miller had 19 points, but just six in the second half when the Hornets harassed the Pacers into 9-of-37 field-goal shooting (24 per cent).

Divac had 22 points and 11 rebounds. Anthony Mason had 18 points, 13 rebounds and five assists and Matt Geiger had 15 points and 10 rebounds as Charlotte won its fifth consecutive home game.

Hawks 107, Rockets 87: In Atlanta, Mookie Blaylock and Alan Henderson scored 22 points apiece and Eldridge Recasner matched his season-high with 21 as Atlanta handed Houston its fifth straight loss.

Blaylock added nine rebounds and five assists for the Hawks, who need just two wins to clinch a playoff spot.

The Hawks remained three games behind Charlotte in the battle for the fourth playoff spot in the Eastern Conference.

Lakers 105, Cavaliers 93: In Cleveland, coming off a 50-point game, Shaquille O'Neal scored 26 points against a tiny Cleveland lineup diminished by suspensions as Los Angeles beat the Cavaliers.

The Cavs were missing three of their highest players — All-Star Shawn Kemp,

Vitaly Potapenko and Shawneille Scott — who were suspended for leaving the bench during an altercation Wednesday at Detroit.

O'Neal went scoreless for the first 81 minutes and had only seven points in the first quarter. He finished 11-for-23 from the field and 4-for-7 from the line with 11 rebounds.

Celtics 101, Pistons 100: In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Antoine Walker made a 5.79-metre jumper at the buzzer to complete Boston's comeback from an 18-point, fourth quarter deficit as the Celtics defeated Detroit.

Walker, who scored all but 10 of his 31 points in the second half, took a pass from Dana Barros as the clock ticked down and was unable to drive past Jerome Williams.

Jazz 97, Nuggets 75: In Salt Lake City, Karl Malone scored 22 points and Jeff Hornacek added 15 as Utah gained its ninth consecutive win over the Nuggets.

Shandon Anderson scored 12 points and Greg Ostertag blocked seven shots and grabbed eight rebounds in 24 minutes as the Jazz won their eighth straight home game, and seventh of eight games overall.

Danny Fortson and LaPhonso Ellis each scored 17 for Denver (9-65), which still needs one more victory in its final eight games to avoid tying the worst record in NBA history.

Trail Blazers 109, Mavericks 102: In Portland, Oregon, Rasheed Wallace scored 19 of his 27 points in the first half to lead Portland over Dallas.

Brian Grant added 20 points and a career-high 20 rebounds for the Blazers, including 10 points and seven rebounds in the third quarter when the Blazers outscored Dallas 31-25 to

gain control of the game.

Suns 138, Grizzlies 98: In Vancouver, British Columbia, Hersey Hawkins scored a season-high 29 points as Seattle won its first road game in almost a month.

Seattle, which set a team record with 17 3-pointers and had its highest point total of the season, maintained its half-game lead on Utah for first place in the Western Conference.

Bucks 87, Kings 86: In Sacramento, California, Terrell Brandon scored on a layup in traffic with 20 seconds left and Mitch Richmond missed the final shot of the game as Milwaukee dealt Sacramento its 12th straight loss.

The losing streak is the longest for the Kings since they moved to Sacramento for the 1985-86 season.

With Milwaukee trailing 86-85, Brandon drove to the basket and connected on a left-handed scoop shot.

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U.N. complains Iraq playing favouritism in awarding deals

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq is playing a "very dangerous game" of favouritism by giving food and humanitarian contracts to countries that offer political support, a senior U.N. official said Saturday.

The contracts, allowed by the U.N.'s oil-for-food programme, are a humanitarian operation and "it is wrong for Iraq to use them as a political instrument," Antonio Monteiro, the chairman of the U.N. Sanctions Committee, said in an interview.

His committee vets all contracts that Iraq awards for buying food, medicines and other humanitarian goods with the money earned by selling limited amounts of oil under the U.N. programme.

The programme was devised in 1996 to ease the hardship caused by the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Russia, which is leading world efforts to have the sanctions eased, has emerged as Iraq's main trade partner, winning contracts worth \$257.2 million this year. France, another sympathetic country, is second with contracts worth \$110.71 million.

U.S. exports to Iraq are declining and Britain has none. Justifying this trend, Trade Minister Mohammad Mehdi Saleh said publicly last week that Iraq will continue to favour countries that support it.

"It is wrong. We are entering a very dangerous game," Mr. Monteiro told the Associated Press.

If Iraq awards contracts on a political basis, it risks receiving inferior merchandise. Iraq should focus more on getting "better contracts and those that serve the people better," Mr. Monteiro said.

He said he had conveyed this to senior Iraqi officials. "I said to them: No games, no political agenda," Mr. Monteiro is in Baghdad as part of a 20-member diplomatic group that accompanied U.N. arms experts in inspecting Iraqi presidential compounds between March 26 and April 2. The experts are searching for Iraq's

weapons of mass destruction. Until such weapons are eliminated, the Security Council will not lift the economic sanctions.

In the last eight years, Iraq has gone from being one of the richest Arab nations to being one of the poorest. The streets of Baghdad, which once had virtually no beggars, today have hundreds of children chasing people for money.

Professional people such as doctors, engineers and pilots are forced to moonlight as taxi drivers to compensate for their salaries being made worthless by inflation.

A U.N. report has found that hundreds of thousands of children in the countryside are suffering from malnutrition caused by the sanctions.

The oil-for-food programme allowed Iraq to export \$2 billion worth of oil every six months beginning January 1997.

The committee has raised the amount to \$5.2 billion for the fourth phase that could begin in June.

Mr. Monteiro said the Sanctions Committee is planning to revamp its procedures for approving Iraqi contracts to expedite the flow of goods. One proposal is to let the committee's secretariat approve food and medicine contracts without waiting for the approval of each of the 15 nations on the panel.

Mr. Monteiro said there also is a need to approve related products together. For example, seeds get the green light quickly, but fertiliser is held up because some countries fear it could be used for making chemical weapons.

Iraq has long complained about delays in approving contracts. The United States and Britain have vetoed many items on the basis they could be put to military use. "All this was based on total mistrust," Mr. Monteiro said.

The atmosphere has improved since Iraq began specifying the exact usage of the requested items, he added.

Iraq thanks Syria for its stand over row with U.N.

DAMASCUS (R) — Iraq on Saturday thanked Syrian President Hafez Al Assad for his stand on its recent crisis with the United Nations over arms inspections.

Presidential spokesman Joubran Kourieh said the thanks were conveyed by Iraqi Justice Minister Shabbab Al Malik during a meeting with Mr. Assad at the presidential palace in Damascus.

"Mr. Malik conveyed to President Assad the thanks of the Iraqi leadership for the efforts exerted by Syria to reach a political solution to the crisis with the United Nations," Mr. Kourieh said.

Talks during the meeting, at which Syrian Justice Minister Hussein Hassoun was present, also covered some regional developments, he said without elaborating.

The Iraqi minister told reporters before meeting Mr. Assad that he came to "convey the greetings of the Iraqi people and leadership to the Syrian people and leadership for their brotherly stand with Iraq during the crisis."

Syria strongly opposed any military action against Iraq and called for a peaceful solution to the crisis which erupted when Iraq refused to allow U.N. inspectors to search Iraqi presidential sites.

The row was defused in February when Iraq signed a deal with the United Nations that allowed inspectors to visit all sites they chose, including the palaces.

Syria's ties with Baghdad, severed at the beginning of the 1980s, improved last May when both countries agreed to reopen their borders to encourage the flow of trade and improve economic cooperation.

Health Minister Iyad Shami became the first Syrian minister in two decades to visit Baghdad when he arrived last month at the head of a convoy carrying medical aid to Iraq.

Since the improvement of ties, several Iraqi ministers have visited including Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz and Foreign Minister Mohammed Said Al Sahhaf.

Ties between Syria and Iraq, ruled by rival factions of the Baath Party, were severed due to the Iraq-Iran war from 1980-88 in which Syria backed Iran.

Relations deteriorated when Syria took part in a U.S.-led multinational force which drove Iraqi occupation troops out of Kuwait in 1991.

PNA urges U.S. to go public with peace proposals

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has urged the United States to present proposals publicly "without delay" to break the deadlock in PNA-Israeli peace talks.

Time is crucial. It's time the U.S. ideas and proposals to break the impasse are officially forwarded as it's time for the U.S. to move from the process of negotiations only to substance," said Erekat, a top Palestinian negotiator, told Reuters.

"The U.S. promised us it would formally present its initiative next week, and starting Monday we expect Washington to send us the initiative in writing," said Nabil Abu Radda, PNA's spokesman.

Mr. Blair said that "the best way forward is to remain open," underscoring ASEM's "absolute rejection of protectionism."

There was an "extraordinary degree of agreement and support" for the need to overhaul Asia's financial systems, he said. The 15 European Union and 10 Asian leaders gathered here had given a "boost" to "the crucial task of restoring confidence in the region."

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IN PRAYER: A Hindu woman devotee offers prayers Saturday in the Brahmaputra river near the river port city of Narayanjanj as part of a religious ceremony called Ashtami Snan. Hindus, take a dip in the waters of the Brahmaputra believing it purifies life (AFP photo)

Blair wraps up ASEM summit with show of 'faith' in Asia

LONDON (AFP) — British Prime Minister Tony Blair wrapped up the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) summit Saturday with a show of "faith" in the Asian economies and an insistence that open trade was vital to secure an escape route from recent economic turmoil.

"Europe does and will stand by Asia in its hour of need," Mr. Blair said, adding that leaders had agreed on "a very clear view of the need for solidarity between Europe and Asia."

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They had also agreed on limited concrete measures to alleviate the crisis, including the launch of a trust fund aimed at providing technical assistance to the region's financial systems.

"dominated" by the economic agenda, Mr. Blair said that "crime, the environment, welfare of children and fundamental rights were all discussed."

Human rights activists complained that the summit had failed to take account of alleged human rights abuses in some Asian countries, notably China and Indonesia.

The summit ratified a set of proposals to bolster educational links between Europe and Asia.

"I believe their ideas will generate new trading links between our regions," Mr. Blair said.

Some Asian countries, notably Indonesia and Malaysia, had made calls for protectionist measures to prevent speculative onslaught against their currencies.

Others, meanwhile, had feared that Europe might seek

to insulate itself from cheap Asian exports by raising fresh trade barriers.

Mr. Blair welcomed a "new era that has opened up in our relationship with China," words echoed by European Commission President Jacques Santer, who hailed a "global partnership" for China.

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Michael Jackson's wife gives birth to girl

BEVERLY HILLS (AP) — The King of Pop has a princess to go with his prince. Michael Jackson's wife, Debbie Rowe Jackson, gave birth Friday to their second child, Paris Michael Katherine Jackson, at Spaulding Pain Medical Clinic in Beverly Hills, a source close to his organisation told AP on condition of anonymity.

The hospital refused to comment. Mrs. Jackson had earlier said that the child would be named Paris because she was conceived in the City of Light. "I wanted to name her Michael after Michael, but Michael said no," she told KNBC-TV in November. "So we decided Paris because that's where she was conceived, Michael because I really want Michael's name in her name and Katherine after his mom."

The couple's first child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's third child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's fourth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

The couple's fifth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's sixth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's seventh child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

The couple's eighth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's ninth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's tenth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

The couple's eleventh child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's twelfth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's thirteenth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

The couple's fourteenth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's fifteenth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's sixteenth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

The couple's seventeenth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's eighteenth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's nineteenth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

The couple's twentieth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's twenty-first child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's twenty-second child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

The couple's twenty-third child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's twenty-fourth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's twenty-fifth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

The couple's twenty-sixth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's twenty-seventh child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's twenty-eighth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

The couple's twenty-ninth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's thirtieth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's thirty-first child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

The couple's thirty-second child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's thirty-third child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's thirty-fourth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

The couple's thirty-fifth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's thirty-sixth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's thirty-seventh child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

The couple's thirty-eighth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's thirty-ninth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's fortieth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

The couple's forty-first child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's forty-second child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's forty-third child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

The couple's forty-fourth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's forty-fifth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's forty-sixth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

The couple's forty-seventh child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's forty-eighth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's forty-ninth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

The couple's fiftieth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's fifty-first child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's fifty-second child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

The couple's fifty-third child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's fifty-fourth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's fifty-fifth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

The couple's fifty-sixth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's fifty-seventh child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's fifty-eighth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

The couple's fifty-ninth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's sixtieth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's sixty-first child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

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The couple's sixty-fifth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's sixty-sixth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's sixty-seventh child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

The couple's sixty-eighth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's sixty-ninth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's seventieth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

The couple's seventy-first child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's seventy-second child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's seventy-third child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

The couple's seventy-fourth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's seventy-fifth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's seventy-sixth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

The couple's seventy-seventh child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's seventy-eighth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992. The couple's seventy-ninth child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

Mayor of Tehran detained on corruption charges

TEHRAN (AP) — The mayor of Tehran, a close ally of Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, has been detained in connection with a large corruption scandal, the official Iranian news agency reported Saturday.

Gholamhossein Karbaschi has been taken into "temporary detention" by the public prosecutor's office, the Islamic Republic News Agency said, without elaborating.

The evening newspaper Resalat, which opposes the mayor, said Mr. Karbaschi was "arrested on a charge of wasting public funds, embezzlement of billions of rials and mismanagement while in

office." But a judicial official said Mr. Karbaschi has not been officially charged of any crime.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the detention was "aimed at making sure he is available for probable charges against him."

In November, the 44-year-old mayor was questioned in court about allegations that members of his administration were involved in a corruption scandal that rocked the capital.

The count prohibited him from leaving the country. More than a dozen senior municipal officials have been prosecuted for graft in the same case.

Newspaper reports have previously alleged that Mr. Karbaschi is accused of embezzling funds in the Boostan shopping complex project in western Tehran.

Mr. Karbaschi, who played a major role in Mr. Khatami's 1997 election victory, has said the allegations against him were politically motivated and trumped up by the president's opponents.

Mr. Khatami's rivals, who belong to a hardline faction that supported Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri in the election, have spearheaded the campaign against Mr. Karbaschi.

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Iranians to hold protests against U.S. at Hajj

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian pilgrims will hold an anti-U.S. and anti-Israel protest Saturday at the Muslim holy site of Mount Arafat, although such demonstrations have been a bone of contention with their Saudi hosts in the past, the head of Iran's pilgrimage affairs said.

"We are going to keep it very peaceful," Mohammad Mohammadi-Reyshahri said.

"This 'disavowal of pagan' demonstration is an inseparable part of the Hajj [pilgrimage] and it has to be held," he said, adding that the targets will only be Israel and the United States.

The announcement of the demonstration comes amid efforts by Iran to improve ties with Saudi Arabia.

In 1987, the demonstration in Saudi Arabia turned violent and 400 pilgrims, most of them Iranians, were killed in clashes with Saudi security forces.

In the past two years, Iranians have been holding the demonstration inside a tent to avoid clashes with Saudi police.

border guerrilla attacks led by the Hizbollah (party of God). Residents of south Lebanon have grown accustomed to dashed hopes since Israeli troops first invaded the volatile area in 1978. The current occupation zone was carved out in 1985.

But violence often spills over into areas like Iqlim Al Toufah near Nabatiyeh, just beyond hilltop positions held by Israeli troops and their South Lebanon Army (SLA) local militia

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